

ABSTRACT

Heather R. Lancaster, QUALITY BEGINNING TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAMS: AN EFFORT TO RETAIN TEACHERS (Under the direction of Dr. Art Rouse). Department of Educational Leadership, July 2019.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate beginning teacher supports in order to discover the most successful components in retaining beginning teachers. The Local Education Agency (LEA) that participated in this study includes rural school settings as well as schools located in more urbanized areas of the district. Beginning teachers with two to six years of teaching experience were asked to participate in this study, as well as beginning teacher mentors, and school administrators within the participating LEA. This study revealed the major finding that strong, supportive relationships between the beginning teacher and the beginning teacher mentor, administrators, and other school staff is a major reason why beginning teachers decide to remain in their classroom. There were other themes identified in this study that provide a better understanding as to why beginning teachers remain in the classroom. Based on the analyzed feedback from this study, suggestions for improving the beginning teacher induction program include ensuring meaningful pairings and physical proximity of beginning teacher and beginning teacher mentor and reevaluation of the program requirements for first year teachers. These findings will hopefully serve as a plan for educational leaders to effectively support and retain beginning teachers in the classrooms. Improvements for the beginning teacher induction program and teacher preparation programs are suggested in an effort to help increase retention rates among our beginning teachers, with the ultimate goal of increasing overall student achievement. These suggestions are based on research results from this study.

QUALITY BEGINNING TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAMS:
AN EFFORT TO RETAIN TEACHERS

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by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of my brother, Eric McCoy Hudson.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Most teachers enter the classroom because they want to make a difference. They strive to educate students and guide them to successful achievements. This well-known phenomenon has lived for many years, and it remains true today (Lortie, 1975). The unfortunate aspect is that the teaching profession has higher turnover rates than most other occupations (Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Perda, 2011) and the majority of attrition reflects those leaving as beginning teachers, or within their first few years in the classroom. Beginning teachers are teachers with less than three complete years of teaching experience. Ultimately, these are the same teachers that need extensive guidance and support during the start of their careers in the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

Since the arrival of public school, beginning teacher attrition rates have remained a concern among educators, administrators, and policy makers due to the challenges faced by the newcomers (Ingersoll, 2012). In the United States, there are roughly 3.5 million public school teachers. Of this number, about half a million leave the school they currently work each year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). Developing and revising lesson plans, meeting individual student needs, collaborations with staff, parent meetings, and extracurricular duties are only a few of the responsibilities a beginning teacher faces when entering their career. Beginning teachers often face the same work load and responsibilities as many of their veteran colleagues. Inadequate preparation, lack of support for these new educators, challenging work conditions, and dissatisfaction with compensation are among the main reasons why teachers leave the profession. Better career opportunities and personal reasons are also among reasons why teachers quit teaching (Podoisky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2016). As with any research field,

there are many factors that contribute to the various findings and the research can be contradictory (Ingersoll, 2012).

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI, 2015) annual reports indicated that between March 2015 and March 2016, there were 2,252 Beginning Teachers (BTs) who did not return to the teaching profession the next academic year. There were 17,618 total Beginning Teachers in North Carolina during this timeframe (NCDPI,2015). The following year of 2016-2017, attrition rates increased to 2,619 beginning teachers who left employment within North Carolina public schools (NCDPI, 2015). There were 21,276 beginning teachers in North Carolina during this timeframe (NCDPI, 2015). The attrition rate of about 12% for beginning teachers in North Carolina is significantly higher than those teachers not classified as beginning teachers (NCDPI, 2015).

To be clear, not all teacher attrition is negative – if there is a beginning teacher that is ineffective in carrying out their responsibilities as an educator, it may be beneficial for the students and school system for that teacher to leave the profession at an earlier stage (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Although the majority of past beginning teacher research focuses on attrition rates and induction program purpose, whereas maybe the real question is – what makes our beginning teachers eager to stay in the profession? Research on the types of resources, collaboration, support and settings our beginning teachers need to remain in the classroom is necessary in attempting to higher beginning teacher retention.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of which support program components are effective in retaining beginning teachers. Although most research has focused on identifying why our beginning teachers leave the classroom, there have been few studies to focus

on the reasons why our beginning teachers remain in the profession (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Identifying which exact types of supports, relationships, environment, and resources help determine a beginning teacher's decision to remain in the profession will be gathered by various focus group interviews. In order to identify the effective aspects of induction supports for beginning teachers, we will evaluate the support systems using a method of focus groups among teachers, administrators, and beginning teacher support staff. Teachers in years 2-6, beginning teacher mentors, and administration in the designated school district will participate in focus groups, one-on-one interviews, or phone interviews in order to understand various viewpoints of the teacher induction program and supports. Understanding that the academic school year is a busy time for teachers, mentors, and administrators, the various opportunities for interviewing will be available to increase participant participation.

The Local Education Agency (LEA) used in this study is a low-income school district, although not all schools within the district are identified as low-income. North Carolina identifies schools as low-income where 30% of the student population is eligible for free or reduced lunch (NCDPI, 2017). This district was selected for this study, as data indicate higher teacher turnover in geographically similar systems - low-income districts within rural areas (Monk, 2007). It is understood through literature that a major area of concern in teacher retention is the beginning teacher turnover rates in these high-poverty schools. Although the main focus of this study is to gain a more in depth understanding of effective beginning teacher induction components, we will evaluate induction components from schools located in both rural areas and in more urbanized areas of the district in order to search for themes and comparison between the two settings. The designated school district for this study consists of an urbanized area, and also many rural areas outside of the heavily populated portion. According to the United States Census Bureau, an

“urbanized area” or “UA” is an area of at least 50,000 people or more (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates a total of about 84,000 in the urbanized area of the county used in this study (Suburban Stats, 2019). For the purpose of this study’s primary goal in identifying components that help keep teachers in the classroom, we will focus on schools located in both the rural areas of the district as well as those located in urbanized areas.

Significance of the Study

Reasons for Beginning Teacher Attrition

Teachers choosing to leave the teaching profession are provided with a survey upon their departure with questions related to their reasons for leaving the classroom. Each LEA in North Carolina reports attrition data each year to NCDPI using five summary categories:

1. Teachers who left the LEA but remained in education
2. Teachers who left the LEA for personal reasons
3. Teachers who were terminated by the LEA
4. Teachers who left the LEA for reason beyond the LEA’s control
5. Teachers who left the LEA for other reasons not listed above

Data indicates that most teachers who leave the profession have fewer than ten years of teaching experience and many reports indicate 25%-50% of these beginning teachers leave during the first three years (Inman & Marlow, 2004). Reasons beginning teachers leave has less to do with “low” salaries and more to do with lack of professionalism, collegiality, and support from administration (Bolton, 2002). Unfortunately, support programs for our beginning teacher vary drastically across districts. The content, duration, delivery, time investments, and financial

investments vary from one district to another – therefore, making some of the data unclear (Ingersoll & Strong, 2004).

There is a variation of beginning teacher turnover rates and types of schools. In a recent study, beginning teachers in middle schools were nearly twice as likely to leave after their first year as their counterparts in elementary. In addition, beginning teachers in the high school setting were about 50% more likely to leave the profession, according to Smith & Ingersoll's study (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Regardless of grade level, beginning teachers report that one of main factors behind their decision to leave the profession is lack of sufficient support from administrators (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

A study from 2007 reported that many beginning teachers expressed an inability to mentally and emotionally cope with the amount of responsibilities and expectations in the first years of the profession. They reported being frustrated, feeling isolated, anxious, and overwhelmed by the constant demands of being a classroom teacher (O'Neill, 2004; Rogers & Babinski, 1999; Schlichte, Yssel & Merbler, 2005; Stanulis, Burrill, & Ames, 2007). Beginning teachers may view their first years in the classroom as a negative experience because of the unrealistic expectations and responsibilities they put on themselves or administration delegates to them (Allen, 2000; Romano, 2008). Most beginning teachers enter the profession with the same amount of duties and responsibilities as teachers who have been in the profession for numerous years. Because of established relationships between administration and veteran teachers, beginning teachers may often be placed with difficult classroom schedules and other assignments (Danielson, 2002; Ganser, 1996). Although beginning teachers are often expected to sign a non-instructional document that states their willingness to participate in extra duties and their signature indicates they were not forced to accept the duty – many beginning teachers may feel

obligated to accept extra tasks if their principal or other administration requests. This is often seen in physical education beginning teachers, as they are often expected to also coach a sport upon hire. Regardless of beginning teacher grade level or subject area, attrition rates among our teachers new to the classroom are less than desirable.

Salary, professional status, geographic location are among the most influential factors that determine a teacher's career decisions. Although, a study from 2013 discusses the need for more focus on school culture, administrative support, teacher input on decision making, and school safety to aid in decreased beginning teacher attrition. Data from Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) tells us that there are definite correlations between school working conditions, teacher influence, administration, staff relations, student composition, quality of facilities, and school safety with teacher attrition (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2006). Most importantly for this study, beginning teacher transfer and attrition rates are closely linked to their perceptions of their schools administrative staff (Simon & Johnson, 2015).

Beginning Teacher Induction Programs – An Effort to Retain Beginning Teachers

Winters and Cowen (2013) suggests that quality teachers must be developed within their first five years of teaching, as teacher quality does not continue to improve substantially after those first five years. The beginning teacher induction program contains the ability to ensure beginning teachers are provided with multi-level supports and resources to succeed in the classroom.

In past years of education, school reformers and researchers pointed out that beginning teachers are often placed in the most challenging and difficult classroom and school assignments (Lortie, 1975). One of the main struggles of first year teachers is the norm of those individuals working in isolation, or when teachers interact there is little discussion or request for assistance

with significant issues in their classroom (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). This norm of isolation in this environment leads to many of the skilled, veteran teachers rarely having communication with other teacher about their classroom practices (Little, 1990). Upon accepting a teaching position, beginning teachers are often left to their own to succeed or fail within the walls of their own classroom. Many beginning teachers compare this experience to “being lost at sea” or “sink or swim” (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002).

There have been many research findings that present a need for effective beginning teacher induction programs in the schools. These programs are often referred to as beginning teacher support programs also. The overall purpose of beginning teacher induction programs is to improve the performance and retention rates of beginning teachers, while providing various levels of support for the new hire. Beginning teacher attrition is costly to the school local education agency (LEA) and state, and induction programs aim at preventing loss of investments in teacher’s human capital (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). For this reason, there has been an increased effort to implement beginning teacher programs that offer support and guidance during the transition from student to teacher for these new educators. Compared to other occupations such as lawyers, engineers, architects, pharmacists, and nurses, teaching has higher turnover rates, especially within the first years in the profession (Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Perda, 2011). More dated research suggested between 40% and 50% of new teachers leave the classroom within the first five years of entering the profession (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987, 1992, 1997). More recent data indicates that over one-third of teachers who leave the profession do so within the first five years (Shaw & Newton, 2014). There is a large number of teachers who leave the teaching profession long before their retirement, and beginning teacher support programs have been put into place to try and lower this data (Ingersoll & May, 2011).

Variations in Beginning Teacher Induction Programs

The overall goal of beginning teacher induction programs is to improve performance in the classroom and provide support to the new educator. Unfortunately, most induction programs that offer mentoring strategies are poorly structured and often fail to effectively deliver positive results that are expected of the program (Glazerman et al., 2010). Teacher socialization, adjustments, development, and assessment are among the many aspects of teaching that new teachers face when they initially enter the teaching field. Teacher induction programs vary greatly. There are typically a variety of activities that makeup a beginning teacher induction program including orientation, regular district BT meetings, meetings with supervisors and/or school mentors, and developmental workshops. Although, duration, intensity, and other factors of programs typically vary across school district programs (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Beginning teacher induction programs can vary from a single orientation at the beginning of the school year to an extremely organized program that extends over the duration of many years for the BT (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Depending on resources made available, staffing, and other factors, induction programs may vary greatly from a financial aspect. As our public school funding is typically frugal, school districts want to ensure they are providing the most induction and support for the best cost, but this can have a major effect on the quality of induction for beginning teachers. Factors such as lack of financial resources (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008) and a narrow view of how to support each beginning teachers' needs hinders, induction programs can often be minimal in benefits.

Although extensive research has been implemented on the concern of effective beginning teacher induction programs, it is still unclear how long or intense induction should be in order to deem beneficial (Ingersoll & Smith, 2011). Because of the large number of factors and variations

that play into these programs, there can be no single format that fits all schools and beginning teachers' needs. Nonetheless – studies show that beginning teachers who receive some type of induction have higher job satisfaction, commitment, and/or retention (Ingersoll & Smith, 2011). Beginning teacher induction programs, when implemented whole-heartedly, carry benefits to the teacher, students, and school in regards to improved teaching behaviors, development of effective lesson plans, and maintaining a safe and positive classroom. Data shows that students of beginning teachers that participate in a type of induction performed at a higher level on academic assessments (Ingersoll & Smith, 2011). Data indicates that the more activities and components within a beginning teacher induction program holds advantages over programs that are single faceted. Variations of beginning teacher induction programs include their goals and objectives, amount of beginning teachers served, and financial support from the county. Our purpose in this study is to identify some of these differences within schools, isolate which are effective, and to motivate beginning teacher induction practices that will keep our teachers in the profession.

The Role of Mentorship within a Beginning Teacher Induction Program

Mentoring is defined as:

Creating an enduring and meaningful relationship with another person, with the focus on the quality of that relationship including factors such as mutual respect, willingness to learn from each other, or the use of interpersonal skills. Mentoring is distinguishable from other retention activities because of the emphasis on learning in general and mutual learning in particular. (Salinitri, 2005, p. 858).

Beginning teachers who are assigned mentors during their first year in the classroom are less likely to leave the teaching profession than teachers who are not provided the support of a

mentor(s) (Gray & Taie, 2015). Many believe that appointing experienced teacher as mentors to beginning teachers will help shape the new hire's beliefs and practices (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Koerner, 1992; Staton & Hunt, 1992). Studies prove that the most important aspect of beginning teacher induction programs is mentorship (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Corbell, Reiman, & Nietfeld, 2008; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Schmidt, 2008). Mentoring is the personal guidance and support provided to beginning teachers, usually by veteran teachers. Some programs compensate their mentors in financial means, whereas other simply do not have the means to do so. Compensation often plays a factor as to whether the mentor will agree to the duty of mentoring a new educator. In regards to mentorship, data shows that the strongest factors of beginning teacher retention depends on type of mentor. Being assigned a mentor from the same subject field and with the same planning period can have a major influence on beginning teacher satisfaction – as these factors lead to more time for collaboration (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The purpose of providing the beginning teacher with a mentor is for communication, support, and classroom collaborations. Past research shows that mentor support positively effects beginning teacher satisfaction in the profession as well as within the work environment (Carter & Francis, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2003).

It is important to remember that while most induction programs assign a mentor to the beginning teacher with the idea that the veteran teacher provides knowledge and skills to the new – the mentorship should serve as more as a collaboration. As the apprenticeship model (Hargreaves, 1988) identifies the “expert” teacher passes on knowledge and skills to the protégé. Although, this model is highly criticized because it's limitations in failing to recognize the existing knowledge of the protégé. A mentorship that consists of a beginning teacher and veteran teacher within similar subject areas co-teaching, working together, and developing through

observation and feedback would be more effective than the previous (Hellsten, Prytula, & Ebanks, 2008). The idea of the expert teacher solely mentoring the beginning teacher may provide feelings of inferiority to the new hire. Providing an atmosphere where opportunities for learning is multi-faceted and encouraged across all levels is more likely to result in constructive learning/teaching behaviors. Feiman-Nemser (2001) provides a phrase – “educative mentoring” – that consists of emotional support and professional support with an understanding of how the teacher learns. Spindler and Biott (2000) reports that mentorship should be a progression where the collaboration moves forward from a structured, formal support system to an emerging collegueship where learning takes places from both directions. Co-teaching, developing lessons, mentor observing the mentee with constructive feedback, and mentee observing the mentor for ideas are all activities that should take place within a mentorship for the growth of the beginning teacher and mentor.

One concern we face is that much of the past research assumes that the mentor will be willing to share their time, resources, and emotional support to the beginning teacher. There is research that suggests benefits for both the beginning teacher and the mentor, but it must be understood that not all mentors have been or will be willing to fully participate in beginning teacher development (Glazer & Hannafin, 2006). The veteran teacher may simply not want the additional duties and responsibilities of being a mentor. This is an area of major concern for the mentorship piece of an induction program – ensuring the beginning teacher is assigned a mentor who is eager to provide support and work with the new educator. While there is extensive research on beginning teacher program outcomes, establishing a universal mentorship model for beginning teacher induction programs is problematic as there is scarce research that actually examines the design of the mentorship process (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007). Components of

effective beginning teacher induction programs should be more of a focus, especially developing characteristics of a quality mentor (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008). If a mentor is unwilling or uninterested to provide constant support to the beginning teacher, the mentorship will be an ineffective one (Normore & Loughry, 2006).

An important aspect of induction may involve informal socialization processes. The mentor conversing with the beginning teacher and stopping in on their classroom regularly to simply check on them usually allows the mentee to feel supported and gain a sense of trust in their mentor. Although studies show that while compatibility between the mentor and the beginning teacher is crucial in effective mentorship, the beginning teacher's willingness to receive the instructional and emotional support is a significant factor in ensuring the mentoring process is successful (Odell & Ferraro, 1992). There are research studies that indicate informal mentorship methods, such as having an unassigned mentor or the beginning teacher choosing their mentor, allows for more psychosocial benefits when compared to formal, structured mentorships (Sosik & Lee, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

This topic of interest and implementation of study is framed by sociologists Nevitt Sanford's theory of challenge and support as well as Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory. George Herbert Mead's (1934) theory of mind, self and society also aided in framing the planning and implementation of this study. Sanford's theory of challenge and support discusses how individuals are going to face challenges, but these challenges must be met with supports in order to effectively overcome and learn from the challenges. Sanford discusses readiness as the person's psychological preparedness for challenges, challenges as the actual situations that the

individual is unable to sufficiently cope with, and support as the “buffers” surrounding the individual that help them face the challenge.

Theorist Albert Bandura (1989) introduced the concept of self-efficacy among his social cognitive theory. Bandura has been widely used throughout teacher education and student learning studies, as he details the aspects of human motivation. Self-efficacy plays a critical role in a beginning teacher’s development, and their ability to perform in the classroom (Keilwitz, 2014). Bandura explains how self-efficacy is influential viewpoints and performance. A beginning teacher induction program has the ability to provide various types of support and constructive resources in order to help encourage beginning teacher’s self-efficacy (Keilwitz, 2014). Constructive encouragement and criticism from a mentor or administrator can not only provide the beginning teacher with helpful teaching strategies, but it can also allow the teacher feelings of support and confidence in the career (Bandura, 1977). Beginning teacher induction programs typically encourage beginning teachers to observe successful veteran teachers, which according to the self-efficacy theory, is beneficial in the development of the teacher since most human behavior is learned through modeling of others (Bandura, 1977). Research tells us that teachers who feel confident in their teaching and obtain high self-efficacy have lower levels of stress, which can ultimately increase teacher retention rates (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy 1998).

George Herbet Mead’s (1934) theory of mind, self and society studied the relationships between one’s self and society, and how human interactions were a crucial part of one’s social processes. He explains his theory and beliefs by stressing the importance of language, gestures, and attitudes in a social organization. This is an important theory when comparing beginning teacher challenges and studying beginning teacher support, as research indicates common

feelings of isolation and lack of support among teachers early in their careers (Shayshon & Popper-Giveon, 2017). Mead (1934) also discusses role-taking, which compares with the mentorship aspect of beginning teacher support programs. Although not all school districts have the resources or lack the planning ability to do so, it is ideal that beginning teachers be paired with a mentor who will provide levels of support and relationships. Mead's (1934) theory identifies how relationships, experiences, and perceptions play crucial role in one's self, and ultimately work behaviors (Carter & Fuller, 2015).

Limitations

The participants in this study are limited to beginning teachers currently participating in an induction program (years 2-3), teachers who recently graduated from the program and decided to remain in the classroom (years 4-6), mentors of beginning teachers, and administrators working to support these teachers in a designated school district. For this study, we attempted to collect exit survey documents on teachers who had left the profession in order to gain a better understanding of attrition reasons in rural schools but were unable to do so.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review focuses on research in the areas of beginning teacher attrition rates, beginning teacher induction programs and their components, and possible improvements for beginning teacher induction to help increase teacher retention.

Public schools in the United States have become a complex and extremely political platform over the years. There are now assessment tools such as high-stakes testing, standards-based teaching requirements, and teacher performance evaluations that have ultimately led to present implications for pursuing a career in education (Lambert & McCarthy, 2006; Schneider, 2012). Teacher workloads and responsibilities have increased. Teachers are now (more than ever) expected to not only educate students, but also reach children with a variety of complex emotional, cultural, and moral values and needs (Pantic & Wubbles, 2012). For a teacher, there are multiple roles each day, and there are no exceptions for beginning teachers. The increased roles and responsibilities of teachers, with lack of compensation across many rural and low-income areas, indicates a strong need for both teacher preparation and beginning teacher induction programs. Some research indicates a need for beginning teachers' participation in formal organizational structures such as grade level teams and leadership positions to allow an opportunity to learn about instruction (Hopkins & Spillane, 2014). This may serve beneficial to the beginning teacher if they are merely a part of the professional development and leadership teams to observe and learn. Contrary to these findings, most research suggests that beginning teachers should be assigned minimal responsibilities and duties within their first years of teaching. This allows additional time for lesson planning, reaching individual student needs, developing classroom management methods, and communication with parents, staff, administration, and mentors. While veteran teachers are likely to be accustomed to these

teaching obligations, beginning teachers often need additional time to become accustomed to the job.

With this major concern across our school systems, there has been various types of induction and mentoring programs put into place with efforts to recruit and retain teachers (Huling, Resta, & Yeargain, 2012). Beginning teacher induction programs vary widely across school systems, but each are put into place to provide support to these teachers and improve their classroom performance – ultimately increasing student success due to higher teacher retention rates. Since a large portion of teachers leave within their first three years in the profession, induction programs typically take place during those first three years of the beginning teacher’s career (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, & Wyckoff, 2008). As with any profession, some turnover may serve beneficial to the organization’s growth and improvements within, but regular turnover is costly. Costly not only financially, but high teacher turnover rates negatively impact student performance (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007; Jackson, 2010; Rivkin et al., 2005; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013).

While research shows most knowledge and proper training can only be acquired on the job, pre-employment teacher preparation plays a significant role in providing necessary knowledge and skills needed to be successful within the first years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2012). Most teacher preparation programs require students to complete student teaching internships that allow the future teachers an opportunity to experience actual teaching and daily challenges within an assigned school. Student teaching experiences are an essential piece of a beginning teacher’s professional development but finding literature on this topic is difficult. The opportunity for pre-service teachers to be in an actual classroom teaching segments and

experiencing the “real-life” daily situations of the job are a method teacher preparation programs use in order to help the student teachers transform into teachers of students.

Though most of the major conclusion (beginning teacher induction elicits positive outcomes) in the literature findings aligned, there were some mixed inferences drawn across articles and a clear understanding for the need for further, current research on this issue in education (Ingersoll, 2011). While reviewing literature on this topic in education, several resources were developed ten or more years ago, confirming the need for further research that would provide more current information.

Transition from Student to Beginning Teacher Challenges

There is a great challenge for beginning teachers transitioning from their established “student” mentality through secondary school and college/teacher preparation, to now a “teacher of students”. In order to help with this transition, beginning teacher induction programs have been put into place nationwide to provide support, knowledge, and skills throughout the teacher’s first years in the profession. Induction programs are primarily designed to bridge the transition from preservice to in-service teaching (Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks, & Lai, 2009). Research shows that while beginning teachers are expected to adapt to the already established environment and climate of the school, it is likely extremely different from the college environment they recently stepped out of. Often there are majestic teaching dreams and imaginations of classroom designs developed while in college, often leading to the introduction of realities and high expectations of the career. Studies indicate that these disparities typically cause for a difficult transition from student to teacher (Shayshon & Popper-Giveon, 2017).

To note, preservice teachers are students who are participating in a structured and guided teacher preparation program, learning the skills and strategies needed to be an effective

classroom teacher. In-service teachers are teachers who are actually in the profession, practicing educating and continuing to develop professionally.

Beginning Teacher Attrition Rates

One of the positive facts regarding the teaching profession is that according to the U.S. Census Bureau, K-12 teaching has long been one of the largest professions and it continues to grow. After two decades of continued, flat growth, the teaching force has been drastically increasing since the mid-1980s (Ingersoll, 2012). Of these increasing numbers, we also see a higher number of teacher turnover rates which is a major concern within our K-12 school systems. With more than 200,000 teachers leaving the profession nationally, teacher turnover is a common topic in education (Podoisky et al., 2016). Nationally, beginning teacher attrition rates have increased by approximately one-third in the past two decades. Although there are many beginning teachers in the profession, those are the ones less likely to remain in the classroom (Ingersoll, 2012). All professions and organizations experience turnover rates, and this is not always viewed as negative. Sometimes new entrants are vital to the profession's growth and improvements. However, the teaching profession has relatively high turnover rates compared to other common occupations such as lawyers, engineers, pharmacists, and nurses (Ingersoll & Perda, 2011). Data indicates that the national shortage of teachers, specifically mathematics and science areas, is due to insufficient production of new teachers, and data indicates school staffing problems are viewed as a "revolving door" (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning are a crucial aspect of the teachers' professional competence. A teacher's attitudes and feeling about the profession can ultimately influence their teaching performance and student achievement (Fives & Buehl, 2012). Therefore, teacher induction programs have the opportunity to shape a novice teacher's attitudes and beliefs about the teaching profession. As

Newton and Shaw (2014) suggests, “If the most precious product developed in education is the student, then our most prized commodity must be the classroom teacher” (p. 101)..

National data. The positive news is that national data indicates a stable beginning teacher turnover rate over the last fifteen years. The most recent accessible data is from the 2012-13 school year which indicated about a 16% turnover rate amongst our beginning teachers (Di Carlo, 2015).

State data. In the 2015-2016 school year, North Carolina included 15,366 beginning teachers and 2,252 (12.78%) left the profession during or after the school year. In the 2014-15 school year, North Carolina included 18,944 beginning teachers and 3,942 (20.81%) decided to leave the profession during or after the school year. Although the beginning teacher attrition rate in North Carolina decreased from the 2014-15 to the 2015-16 school year, it is important to realize the decrease in number of beginning teachers during this year also. Over the time of one academic year, the amount of beginning teachers state-wide decreased by 3,578 (NCDPI, 2016).

Local data. For this study, an eastern North Carolina’s beginning teacher support program will be evaluated to gain a more thorough insight of induction program components that are successful in retaining beginning teachers. There are currently 313 beginning teachers within the designated county. This includes 109 first year beginning teachers, 106 second year beginning teachers, and 98 third year beginning teachers.

Beginning Teacher Challenges

Beginning teacher face many challenges as they enter the profession. Research reports many beginning teachers feeling unable to cope with the various stressors of the job and feeling isolated from other colleagues (Stanulis, Burrill, & Ames, 2007). Beginning teachers report feeling frustrated, anxious, and completely overwhelmed with the amount of workload and

responsibilities placed on them (O'Neill, 2004; Rogers & Babinski, 1999; Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005). Beginning teachers often accumulate the same work load and responsibilities as many of their experienced colleagues and are assigned difficult classroom assignments (Angelle, 2006; Danielson, 2002). Teachers expect parents to actively join them in solving problems related to their students' behavior. Positive and constructive parent-teacher interaction is highly correlated with teacher retention rates (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Easton, & Luppescu, 2010; Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009).

Research discusses how these challenges faced by beginning teachers are mostly due to the disparities between their training, and the realities they encounter once they enter the actual classroom. Once put into the teaching profession, recent graduates often realize that their expectations, aspirations, and professional visions do not directly align with the real-life work environment (Libman, Ackerman-Asher, & Maskit, 2013). Due to work overload, lack of time to effectively plan, feelings of isolation, and lack of necessary support outlets, beginning teachers end up lowering self-expectations and remaining solely in their classrooms (Shayshon & Popper-Giveon, 2017).

Effects of Teacher Turnover

Although research indicates that teacher turnover can produce positive outcomes if low-performing teachers are leaving the profession and being replaced with more effective teachers, overall implications of turnover are negative for student achievement. Along with the financial burdens teacher turnover places on a school district, there are instructional and organizational costs that ultimately affect the educational system's top priority-student learning outcomes (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010; Allensworth et al., 2009; Balu, Bateille, & Loeb, 2009; Guin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005; Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

School districts that continuously find themselves recruiting, hiring, inducting, and developing replacement teachers are spending large amounts of money to regularly repeat this process. Data from the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (Barnes et al., 2007) reveals that approximately \$7.34 billion are spent each year in efforts to replace teachers, which includes about \$70,000 per urban school and \$33,000 per non-urban school. Keeping in mind these numbers do not include additional expenses such as loss of human capital as students are instructed by beginning teachers in the cycle, and data tells us that these beginning teachers are typically less effective compared to more experienced teachers they end up replacing (Milanowski & Odden, 2007; Papay & Johnson, 2011).

Historical Overview of the Beginning Teacher Induction Program

Over the past three decades, beginning teacher induction programs within the United States were developed in certain period of "waves" to reflect teacher development. The four waves of induction include:

- First-wave induction programs (established prior to 1986)
- Second-wave induction programs (implemented between 1986-1989)
- Third-wave induction programs (administered between 1990-1996)
- Fourth-wave induction programs (implemented between 1997-2006)

The progressions of these waves was influenced by sociological, political, and economic factors during that time. Throughout the reflection of each of the developed waves, teacher development became an evident priority in education. The implementation of the induction program waves provided reflections that increased the understanding of beginning teacher developments, quality induction components (informal vs. one-on-one mentoring), and ultimately, the significance of a comprehensive system of induction (Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

Starting in 1978, with Florida starting the first state-level induction program, state-initiated beginning teacher induction programs began developing all across the country. Although the start of induction programs were extremely informal and a bit unorganized, all aimed at meeting the needs of beginning teachers, increasing beginning teacher knowledge and skill, preventing teacher attrition, and boosting satisfaction within the profession (Arends & Rigazio-Digilio, 2000). These were known as the first-wave induction programs. The second-wave induction programs focused more on mentoring and with the increased number of programs nationwide, came a vast amount of varieties. During this time, some were mainly site-based programs where teachers were mentored in the classroom, while others were becoming more strenuous with professional development opportunities and formal observations (Odell, 1986). Then the third-wave induction programs developed between 1990 and 1996 with much more structured approaches and formative assessment tools used for beginning teacher induction programs. This is when state and national standards gained more focus and beginning teacher performance became multi-faceted (Fideler & Haskelkorn, 1999). Data indicated that the third-wave induction programs proved positive effects of mentorships on the beginning teachers. Regardless of the benefits proven for beginning teacher development, termination of funding ended most induction programs during this time (Sweeny, 2000; Wood, 2001). According to Wood and Stanulis (2009), fourth-wave induction programs are our most current type of beginning teacher induction programs today – including comprehensive, organized systems of support and assessments for beginning teachers entering the profession. Beginning teacher induction programs offer a wide variety of supportive tools in our school systems today. Some of these supports include mentorships, professional development opportunities, formative assessments, and informal opportunities to learn about teaching.

The Beginning Teacher Induction Program

“Quality teacher induction is the multi-faceted process of teacher development and novice teachers’ continued learning-to-teach through an organized professional development program of educative mentor support and formative assessment” (Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Induction programs are designed to enhance teacher learning while supporting the beginning teacher on various levels throughout their first three years of teaching (Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Stanulis, Burrill, & Ames, 2007).

Data indicates that the number of beginning teacher induction programs (often referred to as beginning teacher support programs) has grown, and the number of beginning teachers who report participating in some type of induction program has increased by about 40% since 1990 (Ingersoll, 2012). Beginning teacher induction programs are designed to improve teacher performance and provide support to the new teacher, while ultimately increasing retention rates of new hires. Although, it is unclear how widespread beginning teacher induction programs are across the nation. Knowing what type of activities, supports, and specific components of each school system’s induction experience would be difficult due to available data on each (Ingersoll, 2012).

Ingersoll, Smith, Strong, and Merrill (2012) conducted a series of research projects that spanned across several years. Their research focused on beginning teacher induction programs and the effectiveness on beginning teacher retention rates. Their findings indicated a strong link between beginning teacher’s participation in an induction program and their retention. They found that the strength of the effect depended on the number of supports they received during the program, and the most influential factor was being assigned a mentor teacher(s) with similar subject area and planning times. School district beginning teacher induction programs are

typically multi-faceted and provide various levels of support in order to retain teachers. Data indicated that receiving multiple induction components played a crucial role in a beginning teacher's decision to remain in the profession or not. Those receiving more supports within a program were less likely to leave the classroom (Ingersoll, 2012).

Although some research concludes mixed points, the main idea of beginning teacher induction providing positive outcomes remained constant across the literature. Most studies conducted by Ingersoll, Smith, Strong, and Merrill (2012) demonstrated that the beginning teachers who participated in some type of support program performed better in the classroom. This included better performances at keeping students on task, developing thorough lesson plans, using effective teaching strategies and engaging activities, maintaining a positive atmosphere, and having successful classroom management skills. These studies shows that the students of these beginning teachers had higher academic test scores (Ingersoll, 2012).

Mentorships

Mentorships are a major component of most beginning teacher induction programs. Mentors are typically veteran teachers who are assigned to provide support and guidance to the beginning teacher throughout their first years of teaching. Although, mentorships may vary across school districts. Unfortunately, in 2001, many beginning teachers reported a lack of mentorship throughout their induction (Hebert & Worthy, 2001). In recent years, there have been efforts both nationally and state-wide to increase quality beginning teacher induction programs with an effort of retaining satisfied teachers.

Providing beginning teachers with a formal mentor and supportive structures leads to performance in classroom instruction, student achievement, and in some cases, rates of retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Sorensen, 2012). Along with formal,

assigned mentors, informal mentors can also provide support and information for learning opportunities to the beginning teacher (Desimone, Hochberg, Porter, Polikoff, Schwartz, & Johnson, 2014). Not only can the assigned mentor provide structure and knowledge to the beginning teacher, but administrative investment that also demonstrates support has been shown to influence teachers' decision to remain in the profession or leave. Research shows that principals spending time with beginning teachers, not only for formal observations, but to ensure the teacher has necessary resources is beneficial to the teacher's feelings of support. In an effort to increase teacher satisfaction and beginning teacher retention rates, there should be various individuals in the system committed to supporting and mentoring a teacher within their first years in the profession, as these are typically the toughest. Figure 1 describes how support for a beginning teacher should be shared among administration and other staff members, and how each play a crucial role in the teacher's development (NSW Department of Education, 2017). These leaders in education need to know what is retaining our beginning teachers, so they can incorporate the effective pieces into the support programs.

Pairing a beginning teacher with a mentor of similar subject area who will provide multiple levels of support and will help the beginning teacher improve is a duty of the administration that shows support. If possible, placing beginning teachers within close proximity of their grade/subject level colleagues gives the opportunity to observe other's teaching styles and strategies (Hopkins & Spillane, 2014). Mentors are responsible for conducting in-class observations, providing instructional and classroom management feedback, and completing necessary documentation for the progress of the beginning teacher. However, the extent to the quality of reflection provided by mentors during beginning teacher induction programs varies among school districts (Youngs, 2007).



Note. Adapted from <http://www.ssgt.nsw.edu.au/introduction.htm>.

Figure 1. Who should be involved in the beginning teacher induction process?

Components of Beginning Teacher Support Programs

Wood and Stanulis (2009) discuss the nine components that create a quality beginning teacher induction program. Note that the quality of each of the individual components vary across school systems. Amount of funding allotted, personnel focus, and other resources in individual school systems cause variations in these induction program components. The nine components of a quality induction program are discussed, along with descriptions of each component.

Educative mentors' preparation and mentoring of beginning teachers. In order for a mentor to serve constructive and beneficial to the beginning teacher, the mentoring teacher must first have a clear vision of learning in ways that help the beginning teacher learn in and from their current teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b). Selecting mentors for beginning teachers is a critical aspect of the induction process, and should be a main focus on the program coordinators. Stanulis and Wood (2009) discuss the criteria of the mentor selection process of a quality induction program. These include the mentor participating in a quality instruction practice for three or more years (Moir & Gless, 2001), using reflective practices in their own teaching (Stanulis et al., 2007), having extensive content knowledge of subject area (Moir, 2003), having a commitment to ongoing personal and professional growth (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005), expressing strong interpersonal skills (Costa & Garmston, 2002), having effective experiences in teaching adult learners (Arends & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2000), expressing empathy towards the beginning teacher's hardships (Gold, 1996), and demonstrating commitment to the mentoring process (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a). Another important component of the mentoring process is the induction program rewarding some type(s) of incentive for the mentor providing time and support, as research shows this leads to increased systematic involvement with their assigned

beginning teacher (Youngs, 2007). Making sure mentors are appropriately matched with their beginning teacher is another critical step of the induction process. This includes matching mentors with beginning teachers according to school site, grade level, and especially subject area (Bartell, 2005; Schwille, Nagel, & DeBolt, 2000; Wood & Waarich-Fishman, 2006). Preparing mentors for their duties of the mentorship is also important for a quality induction program. This can occur in various, yet comprehensive, measures according to beginning teacher needs (Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

Reflection of teaching practices. A mentor's ability to effectively reflect in their own practices, remain open-minded and willing to improve teaching practices are essential qualities of a successful mentor (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). The mentor must also fully understand the purpose of the beginning teacher induction program and understand how their guidance will influence the beginning teacher's experiences in their first years in the profession (Spillane, 2002; Wood, 2000; Youngs, 2007).

Systematic and structured observations. Not only are the informal and formal observations of beginning teachers by the mentor and administration necessary to ensure effective teaching practices of current national and state standards are being met, but the beginning teacher should also dedicate time to observing experienced teachers. Both sides of the observation are proven to be a valuable part of the induction process (Arends & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2000; Stanulis, 2006; Wood & Waarich-Fishman, 2006).

Appropriate professional development for the beginning teacher's status. A beginning teacher's teaching practices, attitudes and beliefs about teaching/learning, classroom management techniques, and overall needs in the classroom often develop greatly year to year. Therefore, the induction program's professional development opportunities must gradually differ from the first

year through the third year, while keeping the main goal that participating in professional development can improve teaching practices (Alliance for Excellent Education [AEE], 2004; Bartell, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001a; Yopp & Young, 1999).

Formative teacher assessment. Along with informal support provided to the beginning teacher, induction programs must provide formative assessments to ensure the effectiveness of the beginning teacher's strategies, standards are being met, and a positive classroom environment is established. The types of formative assessments for beginning teachers vary nationwide. Aside from some of these differences within induction programs, most quality induction programs contain culminating formative assessment projects or portfolios that the beginning teacher presents as a reflection piece of their knowledge and skill development, professional growths, and goals for continued growth specified by state-mandated teaching standards (Wood, 2000).

Administrator involvement. Although the mentor typically works the closest with the beginning teacher through induction, many beginning teachers report that having a supportive principal is the most crucial piece of their development (Brock & Grady, 1997; Haberman, 2005; Wood, 2005). A past study from 2005 discovered the importance of principal involvement in beginning teacher induction programs. The findings of the study included five roles that principals play in the induction process and professional development of the beginning teacher. These included the principal in the role of an instructional leader, teacher recruiter, facilitator of mentor preparation and mentoring, builder of school culture, and advocate for beginning teachers (Wood, 2005). It is difficult to define the many avenues school leaders can take to affect a teacher's work and their career decisions for the near or far future. Although, research indicates that teachers identify the principal's effectiveness as a school manager, instructional leadership,

and opportunities for inclusive decision making as key factors of their decisions to either stay in the school or leave (Simon & Johnson, 2015).

Data shows that beginning teacher views of their school leader, and ultimately school culture play a major role in their decision to stay or leave the school. In order to decrease teacher turnover, principals should provide a clear vision and opportunities for continued growth within the school system. Hiring skilled, compassionate staff that are dedicated to student achievements and the overall school mission is part of the principal's duty as a leader (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2011; Liu, Rosenstein, Swan, & Khalil, 2008). They should assign teachers to the appropriate subject level and grade (Balu et al., 2009-2010), set positive tones by being professional and trustworthy (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), use formal and informal means to supporting instruction, reward collaboration between colleague and community, and protect teachers from mandates that may distract them from their time to properly plan and teach (Achinstein et al., 2010; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Mapp, 2003; Rosenholtz, 1989). Principals should be open to views and ideas that promote diversity and growth, build relationships with staff, parents, and community, and partner with community organizations that can provide tools to maximize student learning (Spillane, Hallett, & Diamond, 2003; Warren, 2005). These qualities and commitment of a principal lead to a quality beginning teacher induction program.

Supportive school culture. Teacher working condition reports indicate a strong correlation between school environment and a beginning teacher's success or failure during their initial teaching years (Peterson, 2005; Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003). According to Wood and Stanulis (2009), a supportive school culture includes grade/subject/developmentally appropriate orientations, sufficient time for collaborations and reflections, and opportunities for interactions with colleagues. A research study that conducted fifty interviews with beginning

teachers over a four year time span provided supportive data that school environment and culture play the most important role in retention. Beginning teachers working in schools that offer organized support systems with various colleagues, positive implications for growth, appropriate duties, sufficient resources, and an overall mission for student learning are more likely to stay in those schools than beginning teachers in schools lacking supportive resources (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

While research mainly focuses on the formal support systems and learning opportunities for the beginning teacher, it is important to note that a positive school culture along with informal interactions with colleagues is a way in which beginning teachers also develop knowledge (Parise & Spillane, 2010).

Evaluation and Further Research on Induction

To determine the effectiveness of an induction program, evaluation must take place. In order for an induction program to continue improving and meeting the various needs of beginning teacher, research on quality induction is essential. Program evaluations and research within a beginning teacher induction program are designed to keep the program grounded in the needs of beginning teachers, determine how well the program is designed, and identify needs for improvement (Wood & Stanulis, 2009). There are few studies, and rarely any current, that research the components of quality induction programs and the effects on beginning teachers' performance (Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

A Shared Vision of Knowledge, Teaching, and Learning

Quality induction programs must establish a distinct mission in supporting beginning teachers throughout their first years in the profession. Effective assessment tools, feedback protocol and strategies, and positive communication techniques should be grounded in the

induction program coordinators, mentors, and administrators (Arends & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2000). Unfortunately, there is scarce research that focuses on the effects of an induction program with shared visions on beginning teachers' performance and program effectiveness (Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

Higher Education's Role in Teacher Preparation

Teachers are the most important component of our education system. Baumert and Kunter (2013) examined the model of determinants and consequences of teachers' professional competence, which looked into the active role of learners. They wanted to examine more closely how teacher learning directly correlates with one's own views of learning opportunities being positive or negative. This model suggests that teachers' personal prerequisites of learning (motivation, cognitive skills, personality, etc.) have an extreme influence on their uptake of learning opportunities. Ultimately, this determines the development of teacher beliefs of education and learning (Kunter et al., 2013). Although there are always individual and contextual factors that influence learning, if a learner is able to gain knowledge and skill in a challenging, yet constructivist environment, they are more likely to welcome new knowledge (Hashweh, 2003). Also, teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy are more motivated to engage in informal learning activities (Lohman, 2006). Attitudes and beliefs about learning and views about one's abilities to perform are both significant qualities that influence a teacher's willingness to learn and improve.

As previously mentioned, a teacher's personal prerequisites of learning is depends on their beliefs about learning. A solid, constructivist foundation of open learning opportunities can be established through teacher preparation programs. Beginning teachers are often left to "sink or swim" during their first year of teaching, leading to a survival mode type of work and forgetting

or not having time to apply what they learned during their training (Le Maistre & Pare, 2010; Rolley, 2001). Research shows that this disparity between what was taught about the teaching career and the actual realities of the career is at least partly due to the college mentors' disposition (Shayshon & Popper-Giveon, 2017). The instructors, professors, and supervisors of students interested in teaching careers owe it to the individual to be realistic about the profession. Introducing the student to both the benefits of the profession, and also the realities of the job including issues that may take place in the classroom, extra roles and duties expected, and workplace stressors will better prepare the future beginning teacher. Through the various transitions and expectations of the student during teacher preparation programs, there is a need for engaging, productive practices to help maintain or establish positive views and ideas about learning and teaching. This is essential for a beginning teacher's success in the classroom, and could ultimately improve teacher retention.

The student body is continuing to grow in regards of diverse social, emotional, and academic needs. Teachers must be prepared and continue developing professionally in order to provide effective learning environments for all students, with a goal of meeting each student's individual needs. An elaboration (or addition) of diversity opportunities available to pre-service teachers could be a crucial part of ensuring teacher preparedness for diversity issues.

This study will look at the strengths of beginning teacher induction supports. The school system that will be used for this study is located in eastern North Carolina. It is a low-income district, consisting of 38 schools, including 16 elementary schools, 8 middle schools, 7 high schools, one early college high school, and 6 K-8 schools. Of the 23,470 students within the designated LEA, there are currently 49 American Indian (0.2%), 380 Asian (1.6%), 2,744 Hispanic (11.7%), 10,893 Black (46.4%), 90 Hawaiian (0.4%), 8,355 White (35.6%), and 959

multiracial students (4.1%) (NCDPI, 2017). Studying this particular district will provide an insight to both rural, low-income schools and more urbanized schools. This could possibly explain other factors' roles in beginning teacher retention such as increased supplemental pay, classroom/school wide resources, and local attractions from reasons why early teachers remain in the profession. Gaining a deeper understanding of what makes beginning teachers remain in certain LEA settings may also allow an opportunity for understandings of how to enhance the bridge between teacher preparation and beginning teacher induction.

Improvements for Beginning Teacher Induction Programs

While beginning teacher support programs are designed to provide support to the new educator and improve their performance in the classroom, the ultimate goal is to improve student growth and learning while increasing beginning teacher retention rates (Ingersoll, 2012). No longer should the workplace induction portray a 'this is the way we do things around here' attitude, especially an educational environment where learning and opportunities for improvements should always be welcomed (Crow, 2006). After all, many beginning teachers are recent graduates of teacher preparation programs where the knowledge and skills needed to be an effective teacher in today's diverse classroom are provided. Several scholars have researched the influence of university level teacher preparation programs and their influence on student teacher's beliefs, and they show that constructive programs are effective in keeping student teachers engaged and changing negative beliefs about the career. However, little research has been conducted on the impact of beginning teacher induction programs towards novice teachers' beliefs (Decker, Kunter, & Voss, 2014). As mentioned earlier, a beginning teacher's attitudes and feelings of support are a major part of their decision to remain or depart from the profession.

The beginning teacher induction program is a platform for providing learning opportunities, reflections, advice, and support if implemented with wholeness.

Youngs' (2007) research indicates that the types of learning and supportive experiences provided to beginning teachers varies based on mentor selection, beginning teacher assignments, and professional development opportunities offered. These three major components of the beginning teacher induction program require additional research to determine which methods are most effective in teaching and supporting the beginning teacher. Although there is sufficient research that describe the benefits of induction programs on beginning teacher quality (ultimately student success), lack of funding and a narrow view of how to support beginning teachers often hinder quality implementation (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Davis & Higdon, 2008; Hellsten, Prytula, & Ebanks, 2009).

CHAPTER 3: STUDY DESIGN/METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was designed to gain a more thorough understanding of teacher induction supports which are effective in retaining beginning teachers. The Local Education Agency (LEA) that was used to gather the data will remain anonymous throughout this study. The participating LEA is located in eastern North Carolina and consists of both rural schools and schools located in urbanized areas. Past research indicates higher teacher turnover in geographically similar systems - low-income districts within rural areas (Monk, 2007). To identify similarities, differences, and themes between these settings regarding teacher retention, focus groups and interviews will take place with participants currently working in both rural schools and schools located in more urbanized areas of the LEA.

In the 2016-2017 school year, 2,619 of the 21,276 beginning teachers left employment in North Carolina public schools (NCDPI, 2017). Between 40% and 50% of new teachers leave the classroom within the first five years of entering the profession, so one must look at teachers within years 2-6, mentors, and administrators in order to ascertain reasons why these teachers remain in the profession (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987, 1992, 1997). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gather data and information from beginning teachers in years 2-6 of their careers, beginning teacher mentors, and administrators on effective beginning teacher induction program components and improvements.

To achieve insight of the study question, data saturation is needed to do so – therefore, focus groups consisting of numerous beginning teachers, mentors, and administrators will serve as the tool to collect data for this study.

Research Design

Creswell (2013) explains that qualitative methods should be used when the investigator is attempting to gain an understanding of a complex problem and when he/she is researching the environmental factors of the participant behaviors. While researching various factors associated with a beginning teacher's decisions to remain in a complex profession, qualitative methods are appropriate to use throughout this study.

Focus groups were used to gather data and information on current beginning teacher supports. Gathering feedback from various perspectives including the teachers, beginning teacher mentors, and administrators provided a thorough assessment of viewpoints on teacher resources and the public school systems' induction process. Focus groups and individual interviews with beginning teachers (years 2-6) were conducted over the course of one month. Although focus groups were the primary qualitative method used in this study, individual interviews were offered to each participant to ensure their willingness to discuss the topic honestly and to protect confidentiality if that was a concern to the participant. First year teachers were exempt from this study, as the purpose was to identify reasons early teachers decided to remain in the profession, meaning they have decided to return to the profession after year one. From each school, focus groups or individual interviews took place with beginning teachers who are currently in the designated timeframe (years 2-6). There were two beginning teacher focus groups – one including those with 2-3 years' experience, and one including those with 4-6 years' experience. This was to encourage feedback and discussion that the individuals can relate within each group. There was also a focus group or individual interview option for beginning teacher mentors and a focus group or individual interview for school administrators at each school. The variation of focus group or individual interview options available to beginning teacher, mentor, and

administrator participations was an attempt to gain multiple viewpoints and data saturation related to the effective components of beginning teacher induction supports.

Most teachers enter the career because they want to genuinely make a difference in student's lives (Lortie, 1975). They want to educate students and lead them to a successful pathway. Although, most teachers that leave the classroom do so within the first five years of their career (Ingersoll, 2012). Extensive research indicates that there are multiple reasons for why teachers leave the profession (Fredericks, 2001; Hong, 2012). Unless a teacher is failing to fulfill their responsibilities as an educator, teacher turnover negatively affects student achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Although many previous studies attempt to explain beginning teacher attrition and the reasons why teachers leave the profession, this does not provide a foundation for how we can keep our teachers in the classroom. Through this study, the focus was on gathering information from individuals directly associated with the induction programs to understand what factors play roles in beginning teacher's decisions to remain in the profession.

Study Questions

The primary question for this study was: What components of a beginning teacher induction program contribute to teacher retention?

Sub-Questions for the Beginning Teacher Focus Group/Interview

The sub-questions for this study were generated based on the primary question. The sub-questions were asked to participating beginning teachers in effort to gain a better understanding of which support resources beginning teachers feel are most effective in their decision to remain in the profession.

1. Which resources and/or support systems in your current school district are/were most helpful to you as a beginning teacher? If you have worked in another school district, which resources and/or support systems did you find most helpful?
2. Describe your relationship with your mentor and how it has impacted your beginning years in the teaching profession?
3. Describe what contributed to your decision to remain in your school?
4. Are there external factors (location, environment, proximities, etc.) that have contributed to your decision to remain in your school?
5. What improvements could be made to the teacher preparation program to better prepare beginning teachers for their careers in education?
6. What changes could be made to the beginning teacher induction program to help support teachers in years 1-5 within your school district?

Sub-Questions for the Beginning Teacher Mentor Focus Group/Interview

The sub-questions for this study were generated based on the primary question. The sub-questions were asked to participating beginning teacher mentors in effort to gain a better understanding of which support resources beginning teacher mentors feel are most effective in retaining beginning teachers.

1. What are the most effective components of the beginning teacher induction program within your current LEA? Explain.
2. What resources are provided to you by the district in order to help guide and support the beginning teacher?
3. What suggestions do you present for beginning teacher induction supports in K12 settings to help retain teachers?

4. Do you believe there are external factors (location, environment, proximities, etc.) that may help retain beginning teachers in this LEA?

Sub-Questions for the Administrator

The sub-questions for this study were generated based on the primary question. The sub-questions were asked to participating school administrators in effort to gain a better understanding of which support resources administrators feel are most effective in retaining beginning teachers within their schools.

1. What are the most effective BT induction components within your LEA?
2. What resources are provided to you, by the district, in order to help guide and support beginning teachers?
3. What suggestions do you present for the BT induction supports to help retain teachers?

Setting

For consideration of participant schedules, they received the option to provide their feedback via the focus group, or individually, if preferred for comfort. The Director of Educator Support and Leadership for the district provided a list of recommended schools to participate in the study. With this list, four elementary schools, four middle schools, and four high schools were selected based on location of the school. Two elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools located in rural areas of LEA were selected from the recommendation list, while two elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools from the more urbanized area of the LEA were selected.

Focus groups or one on one interviews took place on a centrally located designated school site. If a participant preferred, the option for phone call interview was made available to

encourage participation for data collection. Focus groups were assigned for this study to encourage open discussion and the opportunity to collect data. Focus Group 1 consisted of the beginning teachers with 2-3 years of experience and Focus Group 2 consisted of beginning teachers with 4-6 years of experience. This served beneficial in carrying out common topics and concerns throughout the discussion. Focus Group 3 consisted of the beginning teacher mentors and Focus Group 4 included the administrators. The homogeneity of the focus groups was to increase comfort levels and decrease potential power differentials among participants. The opportunity for one-on-one interviews and phone interviews were available for participants as well. Four elementary schools, four middle schools, and four high schools were selected for this study. To collect data from both rural and urban school settings, six of the schools selected were located in rural areas of the LEA and six are located in an urbanized area of the district. Pseudonyms were used for each school and participant throughout this study to protect participant confidentiality.

Participants

The target population for this study were individuals involved in beginning teacher induction programs within the designated LEA. The convenient sample collected during this study included beginning teachers with 2-6 years of experience, beginning teacher mentors, and administrators. North Carolina beginning teachers participate in the BT induction program for the first three years of their teaching career. The years of experience category was expanded to include teachers with 2-6 years of experience for this study. This was to gather responses from early teachers who had recently graduated from the BT induction program and decided to remain in the profession. First year teachers were exempt from this study, as the purpose was to identify reasons beginning teachers have decided to remain in the profession, meaning they decided to

return to the profession after year one. A combination of focus groups and individual interviews from 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th year teachers from the designated school district were conducted. There were also beginning teacher mentors and a few school administrators who provided responses for this study.

Data Collection

This study consisted of qualitative data collection. Participants were asked to participate in the study with focus groups or individual interviews. The option to respond to the study questions via a one-on-one interview or phone call was made available to encourage participant participation during the busy academic school year. Beginning teachers, mentors, and administrators from the elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools across the designated LEA were asked to participate in the focus groups or individual interviews for this study. Based on a recommendation list from the Director of Educator Support and Leadership in the LEA, four elementary schools, four middle schools, and four high schools were specifically asked to participate in the study based on multiple factors. Due to a low response to participate from these specific schools, an invitation was later sent to all administrators within the LEA in efforts of collecting a convenient sample for this study. Data on resources and supports beginning teachers receive in both rural areas and in more urbanized area of the county were collected in order to identify components that are effective in retaining teachers early in their career.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this investigation was to identify effective beginning teacher (BT) induction supports with an effort to understand how to retain teachers early in their career. The study gathered and analyzed data on elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools located in both rural and more urbanized areas of the Local Education Agency (LEA). This was to search for common themes or comparisons between the supports available in rural schools and more urbanized schools instead of focusing on one setting.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the overall study question and sub-questions, with the results of analyses. Although the name of the participating LEA, individual participating school names, and participant names will remain confidential throughout the discussion of findings, basic descriptions will be presented in this section. The LEA participating in this study is located in eastern North Carolina. Pseudonyms will be used for participant names throughout this chapter for confidentiality purposes.

This Study

The original data collection process for this study was to include four focus groups held on site at each designated school, with an exception of one-on-one interviews or phone interviews upon participant request. In each participating school - Focus Group 1 would consist of beginning teachers with 2-4 years' experience, Focus Group 2 would consist of beginning teachers with 5-6 years' experience, Focus Group 3 would include beginning teacher mentors, and Focus Group 4 would include administrators willing to participate. Based upon the recommendation list provided by the Director of Educator Support and Leadership in the LEA, there were to be a total of twelve participating schools for this study. These twelve schools were contacted by the principal investigator of this study asking for participation.

The purpose of the study and opportunities for participation were outlined in an email (see Appendix B) and followed up with a phone call to all principals within these twelve schools. Due to the busy work schedules within the spring semester of the academic year, we had eight principals respond with willingness of their school to participate in the research study. Direct contact was made with all beginning teachers (years 2-6) and beginning teacher mentors in each of these eight schools by the principal investigator in order to schedule focus groups and/or one-on-one interviews.

Due to participant work schedule conflicts, two focus groups were scheduled, while all other interviews were conducted one-on-one. The focus groups, and many of the individual interviews were delivered through a digital platform, using Zoom Video Conferencing. After researching how to most effectively conduct distance focus groups and interviews in efforts of collecting sufficient data for the study, the Zoom online format was chosen to conduct the sessions. Zoom online video conferencing platform has been used in multiple research studies at renown institutions such as Michigan State University and Montclair State University. Although using an online format, the researcher wanted to still capture face-to-face meeting concepts such as verbal communication, facial expressions, and body language throughout each session, which Zoom live video conferencing allows (Zoom Blog, 2018). It has recently become the preferred method of conducting interviews and focus groups as it is convenient for participant schedules and participants can easily connect to a meeting using a computer or mobile device. All participants are on the same screen and responding live, just like a face-to-face meeting (Michigan State University, 2015). Due to the multiple benefits found using Zoom online video conferencing, and seeking numerous participants, this platform was later offered to all participants.

The two focus groups included one mentor session and one beginning teacher session. Both the beginning teacher mentor focus group session and the beginning teacher focus group session were conducted at the same school, although at separate times and each were in isolation of each other to ensure comfort and reduce power differentials that may be present with mentors or administrators.

Along with the online focus groups, twelve one-on-one interviews were scheduled for this study. Five of these thirteen participants chose to participate in a Zoom video conference interviews, while seven chose the phone call interview option. In the participating schools, three administrators were willing to participate in the study. After multiple attempts at scheduling a phone or online interview, a Google form was created with the administrator study questions and sent to the administrators via their school Gmail accounts. Three administrators responded to the qualitative questionnaire. The wide array of focus groups and interviews was not in the original plan for this study, but adjustments were made while collecting data in order to accommodate participant schedules and ultimately obtain sufficient data.

This chapter reports the research findings collected throughout the study. Of the total twenty participants, nine were beginning teachers (2-6 years of experience), eight were beginning teacher mentors, and three were administrators. The data collection platform in this study varied more than originally anticipated, and the assorted opportunities of phone interviews, Zoom online video conferences, and Google Form questionnaire were created in order to reach many participants.

Participating Schools' Demographics

Possible participating schools were first selected with the assistance of the Director of Educator Leadership and Support within the LEA. There was a total of twelve schools selected

based on location within the district and number of beginning teachers currently at each school. After an email was sent to the twelve selected schools, followed by a phone call, eight principals responded willing to include their school in this study. Of the participating schools, one included grades K-8, three were grades K-5, three were grades 6-8, and one was grades 9-12. The K-8 school is located in a rural area of the district, and two of the K-5 schools are also located in rural areas of the LEA. There is one K-5 school located in the more urbanized area of the LEA. Of the middle grades' schools, two are located in rural parts of the district and one is located in the more urbanized area. There was one high school participating in this study and it resides in a rural part of the school district (see Table 1). It is important to note that a large, notable teacher preparation program lives within the school district participating in this study.

Participants' Characteristics

As previously mentioned, pseudonyms were used throughout this chapter for participants for confidentiality purposes. Of the total twenty participants in this study, nine were beginning teachers (2-6 years of experience), eight were beginning teacher mentors, and three were administrators (see Table 2). Two of the beginning teacher participants had two years of experience, three of the beginning teacher participants had three years of experience, two of the beginning teacher participants had five years of experience, and one participating beginning teacher had six years of experience (see Table 3).

Beginning Teacher Participant Characteristics

Kayla. Kayla is an early career teacher with six years of experience works at one of the rural K-5 elementary schools within the LEA.

Table 1

School Participants

Grade Level	Number of Participating Schools
Elementary K-5	3
Elementary K-8	1
Middle 6-8	3
High 9-12	1

Table 2

Participants

Type of Position	Number of Participants
Beginning Teacher	9
Beginning Teacher Mentor	8
Administrator	3

Table 3

Beginning Teacher Participants

	BT 2	BT 3	BT 4	BT 5	BT 6
Years of Experience	2	3	0	2	1

Jenny. Jenny is a beginning teacher in her second year of teaching and is currently in the LEA's induction support program. She teaches EC in one of the LEA's rural elementary school, including grades K-5.

Cathy, Rose, and Linda. Cathy, Rose, and Linda are all participating beginning teachers at a rural K-8 school in the district. Linda is a fifth-year teacher, Cathy is a fourth-year teacher, and Rose is currently in her second year of teaching and currently involved in the LEA's beginning teacher induction program. These three beginning teachers chose to participate in the online Zoom focus group option.

Julie. Julie is a second year Exceptional Children (EC) beginning teacher, currently in the beginning teacher induction program and teaches at a rural K-5 elementary school in the LEA.

Mary. Mary is a current third year teacher, in her final year of the district's BT induction program, teaching at a K-5 elementary school that is located in the more urbanized area of the district.

Lee. Lee also teaches at the more urbanized area K-5 school and is currently in her second year of teaching.

Connor. Connor is a fifth year beginning teacher who teaches at one of the rural middle schools (grades 6-8) within the district.

Brittney. Brittney is a current fourth year EC teacher at a rural high school (grades 9-12) within the LEA.

Beginning Teacher Mentor Participant Characteristics

Jesse. Jesse is a current beginning teacher mentor at a middle school located in a rural area of the school district. He currently has one BT and has served as an educator for ten years.

Betty. Betty is a current beginning teacher mentor at a rural elementary (grades K-5) school of the LEA. She currently oversees three BTs and has been a teacher for thirteen years.

Tina. Tina has served as a teacher for twenty-one years and currently serves as a mentor for one BT within a rural K-5 elementary school.

Joe. Joe, with seven years of teaching experience, is a current mentor for two BTs within the LEA. He teaches in a middle school (grades 6-8) that is located in an urbanized area of the school district.

Karen. Karen is in her seventh year of teaching and serves as a mentor to one BT in a K-5 elementary school.

Nancy, Ally, and Coy. Nancy, Ally, and Coy serve as beginning teacher mentors within a K-8 elementary school that is located in a rural area of the LEA. Nancy has been a teacher for eleven years, Ally is in her ninth year, and Coy is currently in his fifteenth year of teaching. Nancy and Ally currently each have two BTs to mentor within their school, and Coy has one BT to mentor. These three beginning teacher mentors chose to participate in an online Zoom focus group.

School Administrator Participant Characteristics

Ashley is a principal at one of the rural elementary (grades K-5) schools in the participating district. Janice is a principal at a middle school (grades 6-8) in a rural area of the LEA, and Hope is a principal at a middle school in an urbanized area of the district. It is significant to note that all three participating administrators were extremely helpful throughout the data collection process with their beginning teachers and BT mentors.

Study Question and Sub-Questions Analysis

The data analysis was focused on answering the major question of this study: Which components of a beginning teacher induction program are effective in retaining teachers? The sub-questions for the BT participants were created and structured to support the data analysis leading to answering the major study questions. The sub-questions for the BT participants will be answered first, followed by the sub-questions for the beginning teacher mentors and administrators.

Beginning Teacher Research Sub-Questions

As outlined in Chapter 3, beginning teacher focus group/interview questions varied slightly from the mentor and administrator focus groups/interviews in order to focus on current career point of views. Although questions varied slightly, both sets of questions were to examine the effective components of beginning teacher induction and supports, in both rural and more urbanized area of the participating LEA.

1. Which resources and/or support systems in your current school district are/were most helpful to you as a beginning teacher?

The similarities between responses were not quite expected amongst the beginning teacher participants. All nine BTs find that the mentor support and the beginning teacher monthly meetings serve beneficial in the early years of teaching. Kayla, Jenny, and Rose mentioned the help of their lead mentor within the school, as they schedule not only individual beginning teacher and mentor meetings, but there are also meetings within the school where all beginning teachers meet to celebrate accomplishments and/or discuss challenges they are currently facing. Having a structured, strong support system is something that all beginning teachers mentioned throughout their interview or focus group. Rose, a second-year teacher

shared, “For me, the biggest help as a beginning teacher has been my mentor teacher. She is always there for me when I have questions or just need to vent. I don’t know what I would do without her support and advice; she’s been my mentor both years and she’s amazing.” Julie, a second year EC high school teacher shared, “I think having a team, and not just one person is essential for a beginning teacher. There is so many extra duties outside of the teaching part that can be very stressful and overwhelming. It’s nice to have various outlets when we need something. My team is very strong and they do whatever they can to help me out.” Connor, fifth year teacher described the support systems on a district level by discussing the professional development classes offered through the LEA. Connor notes, “The first year I struggled a lot with classroom management discipline just about every day. I took one of the classes offered through the county’s BT program and it was really helpful. They also brought in some veteran teachers and we had a tips and tricks kind of session where we could simply ask questions, get advice, and bounce ideas from them – this was an awesome resource.” Mentor support and BT meetings were a common response for effective induction components, with a few of the teachers mentioning district supports such as training sessions and orientation supports. Mary, who is currently in her third year of teaching and last year of the induction program, noted “I thought the BT orientation was very beneficial. They provided us with a ton of different trainings, including a classroom management one which was really helpful in that first year.”

2. Describe your relationship with your mentor.

Of the nine participating beginning teachers, all of them mentioned their BT mentor as a crucial piece of their early career experience. Some BTs, including Kayla, Connor, Julie, and Mary, described in depth how helpful their mentors have been as they begin their teaching careers. Kayla explains, “Our mentors are so important to us who are just starting out. It’s so

helpful to be able to go to them and ask small questions that we just simply don't yet because we've never experienced most of these situations." Connor praised his mentor as well as the lead mentor at his school, describing how they actually feel valued even as beginning teachers. "I know some mentor mentee relationships are not always good, but we have mentors that are great. They do these little things for us like provide a small catered lunch and they watch our classes while we (the BTs) get to enjoy some time together. It's awesome and makes us feel appreciated and rejuvenated." Julie talked about her team, but most importantly her mentor who is retiring this year. "She's retiring this year and I really hate it. She has been fantastic to me and has helped me deal with situations that I don't think I could have handled otherwise. She is constantly in contact with me and that helps for sure." Mary describes her relationship with her mentor as "very good, and strong." She discusses the informal meetings they have as being the most helpful sometimes, like during lunch or meeting in the hallways in between classes.

There were two beginning teachers who had somewhat different responses from the others. Although Brittney, a fourth year EC teacher, describes her relationship with her mentor as "good" she further explains, "My administrator is so amazing. She helps create a family base atmosphere and she's one of the main reasons I have stayed where I'm at. She used to teach EC also, so I find a lot of support in her." When asked about her mentor/mentee relationship, Jenny who is in her second year of teaching EC admits that her first year of teaching was a continuous struggle and she did not have a great relationship with her mentor. "My first year was a struggle, but in my second year now at my new school, I have an awesome mentor that helps me with anything I need. My teammates are very helpful and I feel totally comfortable going to my mentor or a teammate for questions. I didn't get a lot of encouragement from my mentor my first year and I feel like starting off new you kind of need to hear "you're doing a good job" every

now and then.” Jenny described her first-year teaching struggles and how the lack of feeling supported led her to transfer schools, where her support system is now a strong one.

3. Describe what has contributed to your decision to remain in your school?

When asked this question, a few of the responses in regards to why the beginning teachers have decided to remain in their school included support from administration and the family feel within the school. Of the nine participating BTs, five provided the reasoning of supportive administration as the main reason why they have chosen to remain in their current school. Julie explains “The support I receive from my team and the administration team here is great. They’re all so supportive and they back me up when I need help; they’re all about the kids.” “The behavior support from administration at our school is amazing. There is a family base here among the staff and my principal – she’s just amazing” says Brittney. All three BTs involved in the Zoom focus group admitted that staff and administration are main factors why they have stayed in their school. Cathy describes the staff as “supportive and the camaraderie is great.” Lee also explains the administrative and fellow teacher support at her school as being the main reason she has decided to remain in her current school. Mary, BT 3 at an elementary school responded with a joyful tone when asked this particular question. “Having the support from other teachers and supportive principals helps me want to stay here. My principal and my assistant principal are supportive of teachers; they have a strong relationship with the teachers and it provides a sense of closeness that everyone feels around here so yea – it’s a pretty good spot”, explains Mary. The remainder of the participants responded to the question with factors such as family location, teaching being a secure job, and they happened to land to land a job in the area and have not considered moving yet.

4. Are there any external factors (location, environment, proximities, etc.) that have contributed to your decision to remain in your school?

Mary and Lee briefly and simply stated the nearby city as a reason as to why they have decided to remain as a teacher in the district. “I feel like we have more opportunities because we have the college right near us. So, we often have students and student athletes from that college come into the classrooms and visit” explains Mary. Connor also described the close town as a reason to remain in the particular LEA as an early classroom teacher. Kayla, Linda, Cathy, Rose, Brittney, and Jenny who all teach in rural school settings mentioned one common factor that has contributed to their decision to remain in their school. “Just seeing the community support these kids; there are a lot of teachers who are a part of the community as well and everyone ties together” explains Jenny. “For me, it’s the small community feel and everybody is all for the school. For the past two years, we reach out to local restaurants and businesses and we are able to provide a Thanksgiving meal for those who may not get one. They’re always willing to help and give – it’s just so amazing, so the community certainly helps me stay” says Brittney. Kayla, six-year teacher, states that “it’s a nice, great community and they support and rally around the teachers in the schools – I think that’s why there’s better retention here. The community and parents really do love and support our school; they come out to volunteer and do things like that so I feel like that’s one reason why our BTs and other staff stick around a little bit longer.”

5. What improvements could be made to the teacher preparation program to better prepare beginning teachers for their careers in education?

When BT participants were asked this particular question, there was a lot of feedback provided. “Wow – I am glad you asked this” laughs Julie. She explained how the realities of being an EC teacher are much different than what she was prepared for, especially the paperwork

side of the job. “I didn’t get much preparation because I’m a specialized teacher. My internship was more of a project and I wish I had received more preparation for all of the documentation and paperwork that goes into my day, aside from the teaching.” Brittney, also an EC teacher discusses, “I wasn’t really prepared for the behavior issues aspect, but thankfully I was prepared to write IEPs (Individualized Education Program) because of a mentor teacher.” Jenny, also an EC teacher explains her same suggestion, “I was ok with the classroom management side of teaching, but it was the IEP writing and curriculums that I wish I had more preparation on.” Mary, Kayla, and Cathy all responded with the same suggestion – realities of teaching. “I thought the classes I took were pretty beneficial, there were some that didn’t pertain to my area but I just wish there were more like classroom management kind of classes to prepare us for all the behavior issues” explains Mary. Cathy and Kayla specifically mentioned the “realities of teaching”. “I think the college professors and supervisors should be more realistic and honest with the teachers about what we will actually face in the classroom. In college, they prepare you as if every student will be perfect and ready to learn each day” says Cathy. Kayla mentioned the same concerns in teacher preparation, “The biggest challenge BTs face are the things you don’t learn in the confines of college. The communication piece whether it’s communication with other teachers, administration, or parents. There are things like this you don’t learn as an intern because your clinical teacher kind of does that for you.” For suggestions on teacher preparation, the majority of the beginning teachers felt like they should have been more prepared about the realities of the classroom and individual student behaviors, as well as the paperwork duties of the job.

6. What changes could be made to the beginning teacher induction program to help support teachers in years 1-5 within your school’s district.

Communication, specific professional development sessions, and minimizing initial meetings/requirements during the first year were all suggestions beginning teacher participants expressed for the induction program. Kayla focused on the communication piece. “I think just making sure that the BTs know how the communication happens within the school, what resources and contacts to have and making sure they have that community built, whether it’s the mentor or any contact. Just having people to feel comfortable with. You are so much to so many people that it’s so much more than just teaching from 7:15 to 3:30 or whatever the school schedule may be.” Julie, second year EC teacher, and Brittney, in her fourth year as an EC teacher, both expressed their concerns for more support in their area. “To be honest, we need more support for special ed. teachers because our paperwork is so much different than general ed.! So, some of the meetings I go to don’t really correlate with what I do. Brittney explain “I feel like a lot of the professional development does not pertain to EC teachers so that’s really unfortunate. I wish we had more trainings geared towards what we do.” She also went on to explain the overwhelming amount of extra work required of beginning teachers. “When I first started, we had a week long session of meetings and it was just too much – it was very overwhelming. It’s a lot of generic information at once, so I think maybe two days of training and then the rest of the days we could be in our school actually figuring out how things are going to work for us. I only had two or three days before open house and oh my gosh, I was so nervous; so yea I just wish we had had more time preparing in our classrooms instead of in meeting.” Cathy, Rose, and Linda all elaborated on this in their focus group. “There’s just a lot of things for you to find at first and it’s very overwhelming because you already have a lot going on” says Cathy. Rose expresses her concern for more specific technology training, as an older teacher. “It would be great if they implement a computer session where you have a computer

room and they teach you where to go, where to log on to stuff because it's always different. There's just a lot to fine and it can be overwhelming". As Rose discussed this, her two BT colleagues immediately shook their heads in agreement. Mary, Jenny, and Connor had no suggestions for improvement.

Beginning Teacher Mentor Research Sub-Questions

Participating beginning teacher mentors responded to the research sub-questions as follows. As previously noted, participating beginning teacher mentors were asked the research sub-questions to understand which support resources they feel are most effective in beginning teacher retention. These responses were valuable, as each beginning teacher mentor participant once completed an induction program and decided to remain in the profession, and now mentors beginning teachers.

1. What are the most effective components of your current school district's beginning teacher induction program? Explain.

Note that Nancy, Allen, and Coy are beginning teacher mentors at a rural elementary (grades K-5) school in the LEA and participated in a Zoom online focus group. All other BT mentors participated in individual phone or Zoom video conference interviews.

Nancy and Allen, beginning teacher mentors at a rural K-8 school within the LEA, explain some of the most effective components to supporting a BT as the structured BT/mentor program and the Key BT program. The Key BT program within this LEA is designed to recognize beginning teachers (years 1-3) who are excelling in the classroom and train them to lead other BTs currently in the induction program. Key BTs create resources, assist with summer trainings, and attend monthly mentor and BT meetings to advocate for beginning teacher needs. Nancy describes this program as "encouraging to our new teachers who need a little extra kudos

and reminder that they're doing well through all the stress." Karen, mentor at a rural elementary school, also said the Key BT program was an effective component of the induction program. Karen expresses, "I think it's a really good thing because it gives early teachers a chance to experience leadership by going out and having that responsibility to speak up for BTs and their needs. It gives them a sense of leadership and responsibility."

Betty, Tina, and Karen – all beginning teachers at a rural grades K-5 school within the LEA mention the mentor/mentee relationships and the meetings as the most effective components of the BT induction program. Betty explains, "Having a mentor allows the beginning teacher to express any frustrations they have, and you also have the opportunity (as a mentor) to celebrate any accomplishments the BT has made. Mentors give the BT a point of contact and hopefully they can establish a trusting relationship when we can help them when they need." She also explained that she met with her BT twice a month and it helps build relationships where the BT feels comfortable seeking help and advice from an experienced teacher. Karen also mentioned the monthly meetings as an asset to the BT induction program because "...they offer different supports to the BT as they are starting their teaching career." In her phone interview, Tina said "I feel like setting up that contact for the BT to have a mentor is good, and the meetings is a good thing to make sure the BT is doing ok and see if there is anything they need help with." Joe, beginning teacher mentor at middle school in the more urbanized area of the LEA also said that the mentor/mentee relationships are beneficial because it gives them a support system and someone they can call on.

Jesse, BT mentor at a rural middle grades school in the LEA also mentions the mentor/mentee pairings as a beneficial aspect of the beginning teacher induction program. He also discusses the observation piece of the induction program beneficial for the BT to hone their

content, classroom management, or other strategies they need help with. “The observations of the BT from the mentor, fellow teachers, or administration is to help them see what areas they may need some help in or to simply give them feedback they would like” explains Jesse.

2. What resources are provided to you by the district in order to help guide and support the beginning teacher?

There were three strong themes throughout the responses to this question. All eight beginning teacher mentors’ responses to this question included mentor logs, trainings, and their school’s assigned lead mentor or administrator. Joe who is a veteran teacher with seventeen years of experience explains, “Our mentor logs helps guide us as far as with what we should be meeting with our BTs about and the things we should be touching on and what we should be checking in with them to make sure they’re getting their BT tasks complete. When we first started mentoring, we didn’t have that, so the meetings were random and often unproductive – these logs are a template for discussion.” Tina mentioned the mentor logs as “...easy to find and a helpful resource that we can go straight to and log our discussions with our BTs. We load it straight to the county website and anyone can easily access it.”

Betty, Jesse, Nancy, Allen, Coy all mentioned the mentor trainings as an effective component of the LEA’s beginning teacher induction program. “We have trainings that we go where we go through the different standards and components, you know that and discuss their evaluations” replies Allen. “Yea, they give us ideas and we talk about what the BT needs, and this helps us reflect and take ideas from other mentors back into our school to our beginning teachers” continues Coy. Nancy shook her head throughout Allen and Coy’s responses. Jesse mentioned the mentor trainings as beneficial because they “...pull veteran teachers in for us to discuss techniques BTs can use for common issues such as classroom management, teaching

strategies, and things needed to run a class.” Betty discussed the digital trainings available to teachers. “We have online modules every mentor is required to complete, and if you need a refresher throughout the year the modules are there for anyone to refer to.” Karen mentions the website where they submit their mentor logs as a “one stop shop” where mentors can access various documents and resources.

The lead mentor and/or administrator within the school seems to be a valuable asset that some of the mentors receive from the LEA. Tina discusses the lead mentor as a point of contact within the school and someone mentors or beginning teachers can contact with teaching questions or BT induction questions. Karen also mentioned the lead mentor as a valued piece of their BT support system. Jesse and Allen mentioned the administrative support and communication as a resource for not only BTs but mentors. “My school administration is free for us to talk to if we have any issues. They help us and our mentees and it’s just wonderful so that a helpful resource to me” says Tina.

3. What suggestions do you present for beginning teacher induction supports in K12 settings to help retain teachers?

Beginning teacher participant responses to this question varied. When Tina was asked in our Zoom online video conference interview, she was stumped. She admitted to having no answer to the question but explained her current thought process. “I mean I don’t know – you can’t really take stuff off their plate because there is always a lot to be done, even for seasoned teachers, we have a lot to do and it’s just when they walk in here I just don’t think they realize how much really has to be done. You’re not taught that in college and they don’t prepare them for that – all the behaviors and everyday work has to be done. I’m just not really sure what more we can do to help keep them (beginning teachers).” When asked this question, Nancy

immediately sighed and replied “everyone is just so overwhelmed in general, the mentors and the BTs. There’s too much on our plate in general, but that’s just teaching nowadays.”

Nancy, Allen, and Coy touched on the fact that beginning teachers need to be in close proximity of their mentor and/or teachers of similar grade level/content area if possible. Jesse, as a middle school art teacher, suggested more content area. “I would say that trainings could be more specific to elective content area because we attend a lot of broad things that don’t necessarily apply to the structure of what goes on in your day to day class.”

The responses for the question focusing on beginning teacher induction took a turn into teacher preparation for some mentor participants. Jesse, Tina, Betty, and Joe mention suggestions for teacher preparation when presented with this interview question. Jesse laughs, “Oh man, that just opens up a can that I can go on a soapbox for a while. There’s so many ways that teachers in general aren’t appreciated – no pay raise for having a master’s degree, increasing expectations for teachers with no compensation like they do in almost every other field.” He goes on to explain how there is so much not covered in college. “They need to know how to solve problems that arise in the classroom every day; everything is so vague and certain content covered in college” Jesse continues. He was very adamant in his response and felt very strongly about improvements for teacher in general, and preparation improvements that could take place for teachers in training. He also suggested the possibility of the district hiring one individual per subject area to mentor those teachers within the schools, “I think more actual positions in the county where somebody’s sole role is to go around to their caseload of teachers in their field of study and provide resources. I am sure there are people like that for core subjects, but not electives like myself.” Tina also responded to the question in regard to teacher preparation, “College doesn’t prepare them for what they’re really going to face when they walk into the

classroom. When you get the behaviors thrown in there and the everyday work that has to be put in, it's just a lot. I know a former teacher that actually quit teaching to be a teacher assistant, so she didn't have to deal with all of the responsibilities and time commitment. That's sad." Betty also responded to the question with a vision of teacher preparation. "There needs to be more of a foundation laid down when the teachers are going through college. There are many improvements that could be made to better prepare them for the real world of teaching." Joe also mentioned "realities of teaching" in his response when stating that he believes a lot of the teacher turnover comes from beginning teachers not expecting the realities of the job.

4. Do you believe there are external factors (location, proximities, etc.) that may help retain beginning teachers in this LEA?

When asked this question, most participants mentioned their supportive community as external factors that help retain beginning teachers in their LEA. Tina explains the rural location of her school and the small community that surrounds. "Our community is a very small, yet strong one and they're very willing to help our school, they support our school and anything our school needs they're typically willing to provide. I think the people and businesses within our community definitely help retain our teachers because they support our school so strongly" she discusses. Coy responded to this question very similarly, "I think here at our particular school we have a real strong community involvement" and Allen seconded that adding, "Yes, anything that they (teachers) need for their classroom they can pretty much ask for and it will be given through different times of the year." Nancy also agreed with their strong community as a reason for BT retention, "At the beginning of the year, several parents and businesses in the community donated school supplies not only to the students but to the teachers and that's one reason I think they (BTs) might stay here at our little community school." Joe also mentioned the community

aspect of reasons as to why BT retention may occur, “I know we have partnerships with certain businesses that give discounts to teachers and there are a few apartment complexes that give deals to beginning teachers who are just getting started, they’ll give them discounts on their rent so I know this is super helpful to them.”

Betty and Karen’s responses to this research sub-question was a bit different than the other participants. Betty reflected back on the realities of teaching for her response to this question, “I think one of the deterrence for beginning teachers is like I said earlier – the realization of the real world when they get into the classroom. They go through their courses and clinical experience, but nothing really prepares them for the real thing.” She was reread the question to encourage her to think about actual factors in the community that may retain BTs and she did not have any. Karen responded to this question very similar, “Not really, I think maybe family for some of the beginning teachers. I’ve got two interns right now that have family here so that plays a big part of them wanting to remain, so I don’t really think it has anything to do with the county or community” she explained.

Administrator Research Sub-Questions

As previously mentioned, an open-ended questioned Google Form was created with the three administrator research sub-questions and emailed to all participating schools’ administrators in an effort to collect data from their perspective. Due to busy schedules within the K12 setting during the spring semester, scheduling a focus group was difficult. The Google Form was created and emailed to administrators for their convenience, to at least achieve some data collection in this area. The Google Form interview questions were open ended to allow for similar data collection possibilities as an interview.

1. What are the most effective BT induction components within your LEA?

The themes in the responses from the administrator Google Form questions included the Key BT program within the BT induction program, BT mentors, monthly meetings, and orientation/trainings for the BT. Each of these responses aligned with the responses from beginning teacher and BT mentors.

2. What resources are provided to you, by the district, in order to help guide and support beginning teachers?

Trainings and meetings held at the district office and LEA administrative support were the two repeating responses from administrators.

3. What suggestions do you present for the BT induction supports to help retain teachers?

The three participating administrators' responses varied with this question. Ashley, rural elementary school principal, mentioned more support with utilizing Pearson. Pearson is an online assessment tool used by educators as a resource to assess student progress throughout the academic semester or year. Janice feels as though there should be a salary increase (county supplement) and increase in technology resources available to teachers to help retain within the LEA. Like some of the beginning teachers and BT mentors, Hope is pleased with the current efforts of the LEA's BT induction program and feels there is nothing additional that should be occurring within the district to help retain teachers.

Main Study Question

Based upon the analysis of this research study's sub-questions, I applied the findings in these questions to the main study question in order to identify answers to this major question: What components of a beginning teacher induction program contribute to teacher retention?

Overall, the beginning teacher (2-6 years of experience) participants find their mentors, administrators, monthly meetings with mentors and other BTs, and overall support systems within their school as the most effective component of the LEA's beginning teacher induction program. It was surprising that all participants mentioned their relationships with their mentors as positive and beneficial to their early years of teaching. The only exception to this finding was from Jenny, second-year EC teacher at a rural elementary school within the LEA who described her first year of teaching as very hard because she did not receive support from her mentor and/or administration. She did not have a good, or any, relationship with her mentor. Jenny discussed how she would only see her mentor in the hallways and her mentor would simply ask, "How's it going?" but would keep walking. She felt alone and secluded at her first school. This was really tough for Jenny and she admits it as one of the main reasons she transferred schools. This finding aligns directly with the other participants who mention the mentor/mentee relationship and support systems from mentors, other teachers, and administrators as a crucial part in the beginning teacher experience. Beginning teacher mentor findings to beneficial supports within the LEA were very similar, including mentor/mentee relationships and administrative support. Two mentor participants mentioned the addition of observations as a beneficial piece of the induction program because it helps beginning teachers receive feedback from other teachers or administration on teaching content, classroom management strategies, or daily teaching duties. Administrators also described the BT mentor relationships and the meetings/trainings available to beginning teachers as the most effective components of the BT induction program.

Findings in the beginning teacher sub-question related to reasons why these beginning teachers have remained in their school/LEA reflected three major themes. All of the beginning

teacher participants described their supportive administration, relationships with mentors and other teachers within the school, or the community surrounding their particular school as reasons why they have remained in their school. These components are considered the social/emotional supports that are necessary to a beginning teacher's success in the profession.

External factors from the school that contribute to beginning teacher retention included the supportive, strong surrounding communities. All beginning teacher participants immediately responded to this research sub-question with kudos to their community and parents for supporting the teachers, administration, and overall school with constantly helping out and providing materials for the school. This was a major external reason as to why these early teachers have decided to remain in their school/LEA. One beginning teacher mentor, Joe, described the local businesses and apartment complexes that offer special deals to teachers for classroom materials or even housing discounts as a major help to BTs and possibly a reason for teacher retention in the county.

Suggestions for improvements to teacher preparation were consistent across both beginning teacher participants' responses and the BT mentors' responses. Major themes here included teaching realities of the classroom and more preparation on the documentation side of the job, especially for exceptional children (EC) teachers. These are considered the technical supports that a beginning teacher must have in their first years of teaching in order to succeed in the classroom. Most of the beginning teachers feel as though their teacher preparation program effectively prepare them for teaching content, but did not adequately prepare them for the daily "real" classroom, including the multiple teacher duties aside from teaching, behavior issues, parent contact, etc. Although this particular research sub-question was only directly asked to the beginning teacher participants, a few of the BT mentors mentioned this in their focus groups and

interviews when they were asked about suggestions for beginning teacher induction supports. This was certainly a common and frequent theme throughout the data collection.

Suggestions for improvements to the district's beginning teacher induction program to help better support teachers within their first years of teaching included technical supports such as decreasing the requirements, ensuring beginning teachers are strategically placed in their school, and extended mentoring resources. Beginning teachers felt as though the additional requirements for them through the BT induction program (required meetings, documentation/paperwork, professional development) made the transition from student to teacher even more overwhelming. Although most beginning teachers found that the meetings with their own mentor and other beginning teachers in the district was beneficial in communicating about common concerns or celebrating achievements, they feel as though the additional time commitments is too much in the first years of teaching. Several teachers mentioned the difficulties of attending these district meetings and professional development requirements through the BT induction program after a day of teaching when they are already exhausted. Both beginning teachers and some of the BT mentors mentioned this as a possible area of improvement for the induction program. The three participating administrators' responses differed from the beginning teachers' themes and BT mentor themes.

One BT mentor, Jesse, suggested the district hiring one qualified individual for all subject areas (not just core subjects) and their main job being to provide supports and resources to teachers (both BTs and veteran teachers) in that area. Three of the beginning teacher mentor participants suggest the beginning teacher induction leadership and administration within specific schools ensuring BT proximities are focused on; placing early teachers in classroom close to their mentor and/or teachers of similar grade levels/subject areas. Administration feels as

though more Pearson assessment supports, and an increase in pay and technology resources are avenues for improvement within the participating LEAs induction program.

Overall, although suggestions for improvement were provided, most beginning teacher participants and BT mentors felt as though the district's beginning teacher induction program provides effective tools, supports, and resources to assist both the beginning teacher and mentor; ultimately making beginning teacher retention a priority within the LEA. One administrator felt this way also, with two administrators providing suggestions for areas of improvement.

Beginning teacher mentors were asked which resources the district currently provides to them in order to help guide and support the beginning teacher. Major themes in participant responses included the flexibility of trainings (offered via online modules or face-to-face meetings) supportive lead mentors/administration within the school, and digital resources. Many of the BT mentors explained the digital resources the LEA's BT induction leadership provides to them through the school district's website to encourage structured meetings and timelines throughout the academic year, access to online modules if they need a refresher, mentor logs. The mentor teachers expressed the difficulty of mentoring and remaining organized in their own teaching schedule, so the mentor logs and other online resources are extremely easy to access and helpful in mentoring their beginning teacher(s). Participating administrators also included the trainings and meetings as crucial pieces of the BT induction program supports for them, as well as their school's lead BT mentor.

Data Analysis

The responses to the research study sub-questions were heavily supported through the data analysis process of the study. Following the data collection of focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and administration Google Form questions, transcripts were created and thoroughly

reviewed. Words, phrases, and concepts were underlined and highlighted in the transcripts to generate themes across participants. Although there were not many, variances were searched for throughout the data analysis process as well. Individual social/emotional supports, as well as technical supports were identified as major components of a beginning teacher's success within their first years of the profession. Table 4 was created to provide a clearer summary of the major themes that emerged throughout the data analysis of this study. Table 4 demonstrates the major themes that were found, as well as the frequency of occurrence.

Table 4

Major Theme Findings

Research Sub-Question	Frequency of Response
Effective Resources/Supports Provided by LEA	
<i>BT Responses</i>	
1. BT mentor	9
2. Meetings with BTs and mentors	5
<i>BT Mentor Responses</i>	
1. Mentor/mentee relationships	5
2. Key BT Program	4
3. Observations	1
<i>Administrator Responses</i>	
1. Meetings between BTs and mentors	3
2. BT Mentors	2
3. Key BT Program	2
Reasons why BTs have Remained in School/LEA	
<i>BT Responses</i>	
1. Supportive BT mentor	7
2. Supportive administration	6
3. Supportive overall staff/support systems	7
External Factors Contributing to BT Retention	
<i>BT Responses</i>	
1. Supportive community	7
<i>BT Mentor Responses</i>	
1. Strong, supportive community	5
2. Local business discounts/housing discounts	1
Suggestions for Teacher Preparation	
<i>BT Responses</i>	
1. Preparation for realities of the career/classroom	8
2/ More training with paperwork	4

Table 4 (continued)

Research Sub-Question	Frequency of Response
Suggestions for BT Induction Program	
<i>BT Responses</i>	
1. Fewer requirements for BTs in program	6
<i>BT Mentor Responses</i>	
1. Teacher placement/proximity to mentors	3
2. Designated LEA mentor for each subject area/grade level	1
<i>Administrator Responses</i>	
1. Additional Pearson support	1
2. More technology	1
3. Increased supplement pay	1
LEA Resources Provided to BT Mentor/Admin. to support BT	
<i>BT Mentor Responses</i>	
1. Trainings for BT induction leaders	6
2. Lead mentors	3
3. Mentor logs	6
4. District website resources	5
5. School administration support	3
<i>Administrator Responses</i>	
1. Support from district administration	2
2. Lead mentors	2
3. Meetings/trainings for BT mentors	2

Note. There were several themes collected throughout the data analysis from beginning teachers, BT mentors, and administrators. There were nine participating beginning teachers, eight BT mentors, and three administrators. Questions varied slightly per participant grouping to focus on original purpose of the study.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter will more deeply discuss the results of this study from the previous chapter, and recommendations for future research will be shared. The outline for this chapter will include sections: (a) Summary, (b) Conclusions, and (c) Recommendations.

Summary

As indicated in Chapter 1, teacher turnover rates within our K12 school systems have remained a concern for educators, administrators, and policy makers for years. A vast amount of this turnover is due to the extensive challenges faced by teachers, especially the beginning teachers (Ingersoll, 2012). The newcomers in education are faced with increasing expectations and challenges, which ultimately leads to these beginning teachers exiting the classroom (Ingersoll, 2011). Creating and revising lesson plans, attempting to meet individual student needs, collaborations with staff, parent conferencing, and extracurricular duties are only some of the responsibilities of a teacher, including a beginning teacher who is just entering their career). Beginning teachers often leave the classroom due to the heavy workload, lack of support from colleagues and/or administration, dissatisfaction with compensation, and better career opportunities (Podoisky et al., 2016).

Over the years, there has been an increased effort to implement effective beginning teacher induction programs in order to increase beginning teacher retention. Not only is beginning teacher attrition costly to the LEA and state, it is closely linked to student achievement in the classroom (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Research shows that although teacher turnover can produce positive outcomes if the teacher is low-performing and is replaced with an effective teacher, the overall implications of teacher turnover are negative for student achievement.

(Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Therefore, providing strong and supportive resources to increase retention among our beginning teachers should remain a priority in our school systems.

This study sought to answer the study question, “Which components of a beginning teacher induction program contribute to teacher retention” while asking participants multiple sub-questions that would answer the overall study question. Through this research study, our main purpose was to identify the effective beginning teacher induction supports and resources, with the ultimate goal of increasing student comfort and achievement in the classroom by decreasing teacher turnover. The study question and interview/focus group sub-questions were developed directly from the purpose of the study.

There have been numerous research studies in the past that focus on why beginning teachers leave the profession, but this study focused on finding the reasons why beginning teachers may remain in the profession. The purpose of this research study was to understand which resources and support components of a beginning teacher induction program are most effective in retaining beginning teachers within an eastern North Carolina Local Education Agency (LEA). It is important to note once again that most beginning teacher (BT) induction programs within school systems recognize a beginning teacher as a teacher with three or less years of teaching experience, as a large portion of teacher leave within the first three years (Boyd et al., 2008).

With efforts of collecting multiple viewpoints and to achieve data saturation for this study, beginning teachers (BT) with 2-6 years of experience, beginning teacher mentors, as well as school administrators within the participating LEA were asked to participate. The option of focus groups and one-on-one interviews were offered for comfort the participant. Upon

participant request, all individual interviews and focus groups were conducted via an online Zoom video conference or telephone interview.

Following the first contact made with all school administrators, all teachers with 2-6 years of experience, and all beginning teacher mentors within the LEA, we received few responses willing to participate. An additional email was sent to all administrators, beginning teachers, and beginning teacher mentors discussing the purpose of this study with the option of the online focus groups included for those willing to participate. Phone calls were also made to school administrators with efforts of gaining more participation. With this second outreach, including the online focus group option and/or one on one interviews, we received multiple beginning teacher and beginning teacher mentors willing to participate in the study. The Zoom online video conference option was the immediate preferred platform for ten of the participants. Seven participants chose the phone interview option. With difficulty reaching most of administration, a Google Form was created as an additional option for receiving data from administration and shared with all principals within the participating LEA. Three administrators completed the Google Form, which included the beginning teacher mentor and administrator study questions.

Conclusions

Conclusions from this research study resulted from the responses of the beginning teachers, beginning teacher mentors, and school administrators who participated within the designated LEA. This section will include the (a) major themes found from participant responses, and (b) final conclusions from this research study.

Major Themes

BT themes– Current effective BT resources/supports provided by LEA. Participating BTs felt as though their designated mentor within their school was an effective support resource for them within their first years of teaching. All nine BTs mentioned their mentor as a supportive contact they can go to when they are facing a classroom management challenge, developing points for a parent conference, or seeking ideas for lesson planning. Another common response included the Key BT program, which recognizes BTs who are excelling in the classroom, as an effective support system provided by the LEA. “The Key BT program is encouraging to our new teachers who need a little extra kudos and reminder that they’re doing well through all the stress”, mentions Nancy. Karen was also a mentor who describes the Key BT program as an asset to the LEA’s BTs and mentors, “I think the Key BT program is a really good thing because it gives early teachers a chance to experience leadership by going out and having the responsibility to speak up for BTs and their needs.” Six of the eight BT mentors and school administrators mentioned the Key BT Program as a current component of the LEAs beginning teacher induction program that is effective in retaining early teachers.

BT mentor & administrator themes - Current effective BT resources/supports provided by LEA. When BT mentors and administrators were asked about the effective resources and support systems within the LEA, the mentor relationship with the BT was the common theme among responses. Although the administrator Google Form responses did not include much detail, “meeting with BT and mentor” and “BT mentor relationships” were common responses. BT mentors who participated in the phone interviews and online interview sessions described how crucial the relationship between the mentor and BT can serve for both. Nancy and Allen felt that the BT program within the participating LEA had strengthened over

the years and now includes a more structured agenda that benefits the BT and mentor relationships and professional growth.

BT themes – Reasons why BTs have remained in current school/LEA. “Support” was the common descriptor heard throughout phone interviews and online interview with BT participants, especially when asked the reasons behind remaining in their current LEA and/or school. Having a supportive beginning teacher mentor, supportive administration, and overall supportive staff environment were reasons why they have decided to remain in their school. All BT participants responded with one or more of these reasons for their decision to stay. Several of the participants, including Brittney, Cathy, Lee, and Mary responded in detail as to how supportive their administration and support systems were within the school. Cathy immediately lit up with a smile when speaking of her supportive administration. It was evident through the responses from this research sub question that having a strong support system within the school is a crucial factor in a beginning teacher’s decision to remain in their school.

BT themes – External factors contributing to BT retention. The word “supportive” reappeared when BT participants were asked which external factors outside of the school contributed to their decision to return. Of the nine participating beginning teachers, seven provided similar feedback to this interview/focus group question. When reviewing responses for this particular area of the beginning teacher induction program, it was immediately evident that a strong, supportive community plays a critical role in beginning teacher retention. Mary describes the staff and school community as being “really supportive, and the sole reason I have chosen to stay here”. She went on to discuss how the staff, administration, and local community is small but that this causes for a stronger relationship among everyone. “The camaraderie here is great, from the teachers to the administrators. That’s why I have stayed” explains Cathy, as Linda and

Rose agreed. Julie describes her support from her team as “amazing”. “The administration is great, the community is great and they are all about the kids which makes me happy to be here”, she continues. Brittney describes her small school community and how “everybody is all for the school; for the past two years I have been here, the community comes together at Thanksgiving and provides food to some of our students’ families that may not be able to get a good meal otherwise. You’ll see stickers on so many vehicles around here that support our school, it’s just so wonderful and honestly feels like a big family.” Jenny responded with a similar response, stating that “many of our kids’ families attend the same local churches or participate in the community together so that makes it comfortable to communicate; it’s clear that the community is just trying to help.” Kayla also describes the main reason she has remained in her current school for the past five years is the support not only within the school, but the support system outside of the school. “Having a great community support that rallies around the teachers causes more retention here among our teachers. They support our administrator and they’ll come out to volunteer and do things like that and we really feel their support here, which is maybe why we stick around a little bit longer” she laughs.

BT mentor themes – External factors contributing to BT retention. The “strong/supportive community” was also the common response among BT mentors when asked about external factors contributing to teacher retention. Tina described her school community as “very small, but a strong one that’s willing to help out our school with anything we need”. Coy and Nancy had similar responses that strengthened this theme of a strong and supportive community serving as a significant role in teacher retention. Nancy and Joe mentioned the local business partnerships that the LEA has developed for teachers to receive discounts at certain

restaurants and shops within the community. Both described this as a great community incentive for BTs within their school.

BT mentor & administration themes – LEA supports/resources provided to BT mentor/administration to help support the BT. Of the eleven participating BT mentors and three administrators, five discussed the lead mentor within each school as a primary resource that the LEA allows for beginning teacher support and mentor support. This was one of the major themes found within this study question. Tina, Karen, Jesse, and Allen all mentioned the assigned lead mentor as a valuable asset to each school. The lead mentor support resource was described as “point of contact between the BT, mentor, and admin.”, “support system that’s always open”, and “helpful piece of the program, not only to the BTs but to the mentors and principals”. The other two themes found in this question were the mentor logs required through the BT induction program and the trainings provided by the LEA. Six of the eleven BT mentors and administrators described the online mentor logs as a helpful guide to supporting the beginning teacher most efficiently. “They help us stay on task as far as what we should be touching in with our BT about to make sure they’re completing all of their induction program paperwork”, explained Joe. It was described as “user friendly”, as the mentor logs can be accessed through the county school’s website at any time. All eleven participating BT and administrators mentioned the trainings from BT induction leaders and district administration and/or the district website resources as a critical support resource provided to the BT mentor and administration from the LEA. Betty, Jesse, Nancy, Allen, and Coy mentioned the mentor trainings as a helpful resources the LEA provides to give mentors ideas of what the BT may need and get ideas from other mentors within the LEA on how to best support beginning teachers. Karen and Betty discuss in depth the online component of the BT induction program and how it

has served beneficial for the beginning teacher, the mentor, and the administrator. It was referred to as a “one stop shop”, “outlet for a refresher if you need some ideas after beginning of year training”, and “helpful tool provided by the district”.

BT themes – Suggestions for teacher preparation. After analyzing the responses collected throughout this study, suggestions for teacher preparation was a common topic of concern for most of the beginning teacher participants. Although we expected some discussion to arise about this component of beginning teaching in our initial plan, we found this concept to be a densely common theme from our beginning teacher responses. Eight of the nine beginning teacher participants referred to the “preparations for the realities of teaching” when asked about suggestions for teacher preparation programs. “I think the biggest challenge that BTs face are the things that you don’t learn within the confines of college – like the communication piece between parents, students in your classroom, or colleagues. It’s not something you typically learn in college or in your internship because your mentor kind of does that for you” explains Kayla who has 6 years of experience. She clearly recalls the disparity between her teacher preparation experience and entering the real world of the teaching profession. Although Mary, Jenny, and Connor participated in individual interviews, all provided one specific suggestion for teacher education program - more classroom management preparation. “The classes that I took were pretty beneficial, but I wish there had been more classroom management classes and training because in college it was always the perfect classroom with the perfect students. Then you jump into a real classroom and no one has the perfect classroom with all of the perfect kids at all”, Mary explains. Connor discussed how he really struggled with classroom management throughout his first year of teaching and how he feels “more classroom management preparation so the BTs know how to handle all of the discipline issues would be a big asset to them”. Cathy,

Rose, and Linda discussed the idea of the college instructors, professors, and advisors being “more realistic about what we should expect when lecturing and preparing us for our teaching careers”. Rose went on to discuss her concern of teacher education programs veering away from focusing on the realities of beginning teaching to avoid discouraging enrollment in the programs.

Jenny and Julie are both elementary exceptional children (EC) teachers, and Brittney is a high school EC teacher within the participating LEA. Of the nine participating beginning teachers, these three BTs were our EC teachers and although their responses were collected individually, there was one common theme when asked about teacher preparation. All three participating EC teachers within this LEA suggested more “preparation with paperwork” in the teacher preparation programs. Jenny thoroughly discussed how she felt a lot of the coursework in her program did not apply to EC student teachers, and that “learning how to correctly write IEPs (individualized education program) is something we need to know, because it is a major part of our job.”

BT themes – Suggestions for BT induction program. While three of the beginning teacher (BT) participants felt as though the LEA was currently provided optimal resources and support systems through the induction program, there was certainly a common theme among the six that responded. When asked about their perception of the participating LEAs BT induction program and suggestions for improvement in order to help retain early year teachers, there was one common response among all of those six participants – “fewer requirements for the beginning teachers within the program”. Cathy, Rose, and Linda participated in the study together via an online Zoom focus group and discussed all of the new components of being a beginning teacher paired with the BT induction program requirements as being “overwhelming”. They suggest less requirements for the BT in their first year as the teacher is already trying to

“learn so many new things” about their school system and colleagues, lesson planning and evaluations, classroom management and parent communication, Rose and Linda discuss. This was certainly a strong suggestion and area of concern for these teachers still early in their career. Connor also responded with the suggestion of somehow minimizing the BT induction meeting times and/or paperwork required in the induction program, as “BTs already have so much going on their first year in the classroom”.

BT mentor & administrator themes – Suggestions for BT induction program. While four of the participating BT mentors briefly responded that their LEA’s BT induction program was currently providing effective resources for the beginning teachers, there was one common theme found among three of the participants’ feedback when asked how the BT induction program could better serve the beginning teacher. Placing beginning teachers close in proximity to their mentor within the school was a common response, with three of the eight participating mentors suggesting this as an area to focus on in the BT induction program. “Making sure they are paired with a BT mentor within their building or as physically close as possible is something they should consider” discusses Coy and Allen who participated in this study together in an online Zoom focus group. In his one-on-one online Zoom interview, Jesse also suggested focusing on teacher placement for the BT induction coordinators. “Finding someone nearby or who actually teaches the same subject as the BT is something they should think about when pairing BTs with mentors”, he suggests.

Of the three participating administrators in this study, there were no common themes found in this area. When asked about suggestions for the current BT induction program, we collected three different responses from each participant. One administrator suggested additional Pearson (testing) support, one suggested more technology resources and supports, and one

suggested increased supplement pay. Although we felt strongly that we would find common themes in administrator responses, due to the limited number of administrator participants, we cannot consider these three individual responses as crucial pieces of the study.

Final Conclusions

The transition from being a student, taking courses and preparing for one's own classroom, to the teacher can often bring excitement and stressful experiences for a beginning teacher. As a beginning teacher enters their first classroom, they are often faced with various challenges, not all which they are prepared for. These challenges often include the social/emotional concepts as well the technical concepts of the job. The social/emotional areas include the beginning teacher's relationships (or lack of) with mentors, administrators, other staff members, and the community, as well as stress and frustration. The technical challenges beginning teachers often face and feel unprepared for include allocating time for lesson planning, revising, and implementing, managing the classroom and behaviors as they arise, and conversations with parents. Both of these areas were found of great significance to the beginning teachers success in past research studies, and also throughout this study. Preparing, implementing, and revising lesson plans typically consumes a majority of a beginning teacher's time. Along with lesson planning, beginning teachers are often faced with unexpected challenges such as adapting to individual student needs, conferencing with parents, classroom management, student discipline issues, collaborating with coworkers, and extracurricular duties. The time teachers have to attend to these extra duties outside of their instructional time lies within their planning period during the school day. It is important to note that the lengths of planning periods vary across grade levels and individual schools. Also, as previously discussed, beginning teachers are often held accountable for similar extra duties and responsibilities as a veteran

teacher. Also, beginning teachers are in the BT induction program within their district which requires district meetings, school meetings with their BT mentor, and additional paperwork. Beginning teachers often leave the profession due to the overwhelming and unrealistic expectations.

With beginning teacher attrition remaining a concern in education, there have been numerous past research studies that focus on reasons for beginning teacher attrition. This study focuses more positively on the reasons for beginning teacher retention, specifically in an eastern North Carolina school district. The participating Local Education Agency (LEA) consists of both rural school settings and schools located in a more urbanized area of the county. Schools located in rural areas of the district, as well as schools located within the urban area of the district participated in this study with efforts of understanding which resources and supports are effective in retaining beginning teachers. Another purpose of including both school settings in this study was for the possibly of identifying particular themes why beginning teachers may remain in the classroom in a rural area or in a more urbanized area.

This study revealed significant results that educators and researchers will hopefully consider as we move forward in increasing teacher retention in our schools, and ultimately improving individual student outcomes in our K12 school systems. Based on the results of this study, the research provided three major conclusions that answered the study question – “What components of a beginning teacher induction program contribute to teacher retention?” Based on responses from participating beginning teachers, beginning teacher mentors, and administrators in this study, supportive mentors, administration, and community were the most common responses when asked about reasons why beginning teachers remained in their classroom. It is evident that relationships beginning teacher mentors, school administrators, and other school

staff make with the beginning teacher plays a crucial role in their decision to remain. This directly aligns with previous research that reveals beginning teachers' lack of support and feelings of isolation as a main reason why they leave the classroom. Beginning teachers who experience strong parent relationships and a supportive outside community are likely to remain in their position longer as well.

Another theme concluded from this study is beginning teachers who are prepared for the realities of the teaching career are more likely to remain in the profession. The majority of beginning teacher and beginning teacher mentor participants felt as though beginning teachers are often blindsided by the various job duties outside of planning lessons and teaching their students. With the extra duties and responsibilities, a beginning teacher faces, they must also figure out how to manage a classroom and behavior issues. These realities of the teaching career are typically minor pieces of a teacher preparation program, as subject content and theory are often the centerpiece.

The final conclusion made from this research study focused on the beginning teacher induction components. Several of the participants discussed the requirements of the induction program as often feeling like extra duties they were being assigned along with their teaching responsibilities and extra school duties. Although the meetings were portrayed as beneficial to the beginning teacher's development, many of the beginning teachers and mentors felt that the induction program requirements added additional stress to the teacher. Beginning teacher program requirements typically include required monthly district wide meeting for beginning teachers, optional district wide meetings and professional development sessions, meetings within the school between beginning teacher and mentor, and documentation of progress to ensure promotion.

Recommendations

Based on previous research discussed earlier, and the responses gathered from participants throughout this research study, there are a few recommendations to suggest for policy makers in education, district administrators, and school administrators in order to help increase retention among our beginning teacher population. These recommendations include both social/emotional supports as well as technical supports (see figure 2).

Beginning teachers' access to a strong, support system is crucial as they begin their career in education. One suggestion that can be made with efforts to establish these relationships is to ensure the beginning teacher is placed with a mentor who is close in proximity. For the beginning teacher, having regular interaction with their mentor(s) throughout the school day can increase comfortability and feelings of support throughout challenges they face in their first few years. If the beginning teacher's classroom and the mentor's classroom are physically close within the school, it is more convenient for the teacher to utilize the mentor as a support resource. In regard to building strong relationships between the beginning teacher and mentor, another suggestion when pairing is to ensure the beginning teacher has a mentor with a similar background and/or content knowledge. When beginning teachers are assigned a mentor with unlike content areas or whose classrooms are distanced from the beginning teacher, this often leads to the beginning teacher feeling "lost as sea" in their first years of the profession, as previously mentioned from past research studies.

Another recommendation for the beginning teacher induction program is adjusting the requirements for the beginning teacher throughout the first three years of their career. Entering their first classroom, the beginning teacher's workload is typically full. They are preparing and revising lessons, getting to know their students and how to individually reach those with

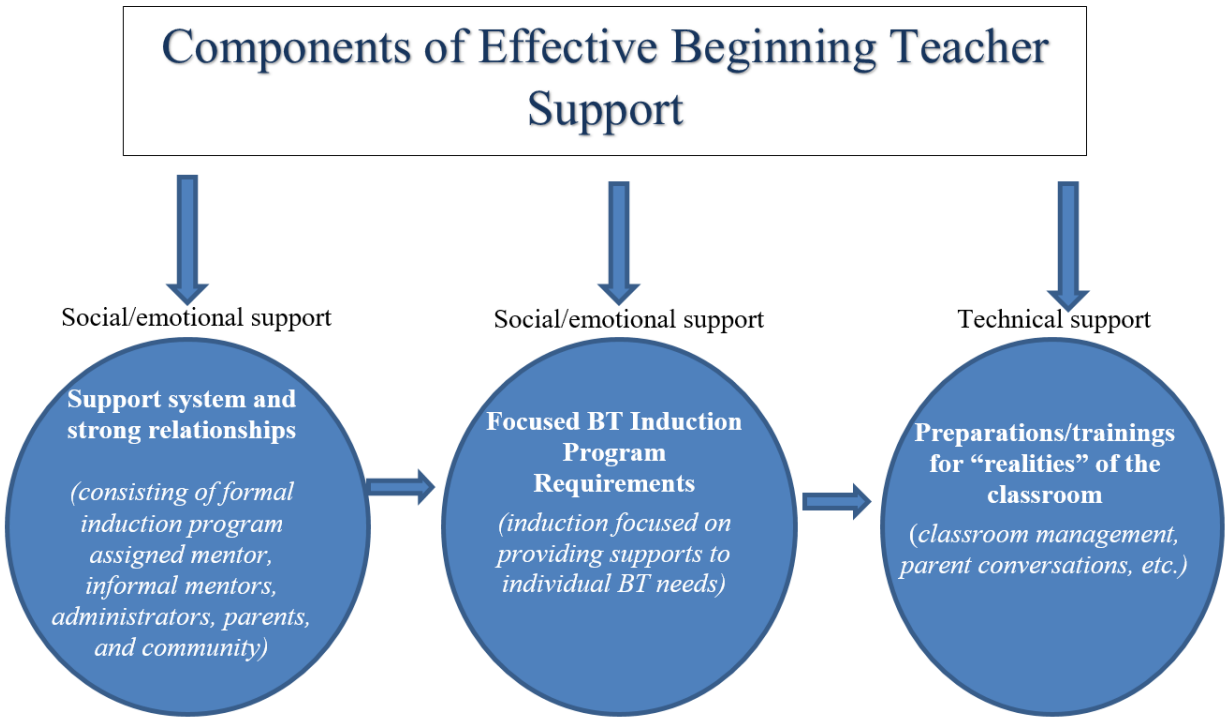


Figure 2. Components of effective beginning teacher support.

accommodations, learning classroom management, tackling behavior issues, and responding to extra or unexpected duties of the job. The beginning teacher is also trying to learn the school they have just entered, collaborate with colleagues, and form relationships with students' parents. As previously mentioned, beginning teachers are often expected to carry the same workload as veteran teachers who have years of experience in the classroom. Additional documentation and meetings required of beginning teachers through the induction program usually adds additional stress that is unnecessary to the teacher. To enhance the beginning teacher induction program so that it is exclusively supportive to the beginning teacher, there needs to be more attention and specific resources provided directly to the beginning teacher. Instead of the beginning teacher feeling as though they have another meeting to attend or additional tasks to add to their workload for the induction program, they should feel as though the induction program is implemented to ease some of their pains of being a beginning teacher. This may require the beginning teacher induction directors visiting each school to individually meet with the beginning teacher mentor and the beginning teacher in order to learn their specific needs. Targeting individual needs and providing resources directly for those needs will serve more beneficial in actually supporting the beginning teacher, instead of requiring all beginning teacher's attendance at monthly meetings that cover broad topics. Utilizing a digital platform to deploy the information needed to complete the induction program to the beginning teachers and mentors may serve more beneficial while focusing on individual beginning teacher support.

Several participants in this study felt as though their teacher preparation program did not successfully prepare them for the "realities of the teaching career". This phrase was a common theme among participants in focus groups and individual interviews. Although specific teacher preparation programs were not discussed, it was a common topic among a majority of the

participants who had various educational backgrounds. While most participants felt their teacher preparation program effectively provided them with the subject content knowledge, most beginning teachers feel as though they were not prepared for the classroom management and behavior challenges they faced once they were in their own classroom. Building the bridge between the teacher preparation phase and the beginning teacher induction support program can allow for a better understanding of how to support, and ultimately retain, our beginning teachers.

Future Research

There are many opportunities for future research in regard to beginning teacher induction and support resources to help increase retention rates. Whereas this research study focused specifically on support resources that beginning teachers in an eastern North Carolina school district find effective in their decision to remain in their position, more information could be collected on the comparison of resources available to low-income schools versus schools with more funding.

Following this study, research found that issues within beginning teacher induction programs are most prevalent at low-income schools, as new teachers are less likely to have appropriately assigned mentors (Donaldson & Johnson, 2010; Johnson, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu, & Donaldson, 2004; Kardos & Johnson, 2010). Ingersoll and Strong's (2011) study of beginning teacher program and mentoring effects on turnover showed that beginning teacher turnover rates were significantly less in low-poverty schools where appropriate mentor matching and collaboration took place. Since the high rate of teacher turnover makes it difficult for schools to recruit effective teachers, the low-income and minority student population attending these schools are usually instructed by the least experienced teachers (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Carroll, Reichardt, Guarino, & Mejia, 2009; Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler, 2007;

Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Research indicates that due to increased teacher turnover rates among low-income schools, the students in these systems are more likely to receive education from beginning teachers who are often less effective than more experienced teachers (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigfor, 2005; Grisom, 2011; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Low-poverty school systems often have more financial support and resources to fund sound beginning teacher induction programs. Future research could investigate how to properly provide similar resources to beginning teachers located in these low-income schools.

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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 ☎ · www.ecu.edu/ORIC/irb

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Heather Lancaster](#)
CC: [Art Rouse](#)
Date: 12/18/2018
Re: [UMCIRB 18-001185](#)
Finding Effective Beginning Teacher Preparation and Induction Components

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 12/17/2018 to 12/16/2019. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category # 6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Consent Form	Consent Forms
Description & Script	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Focus Group Questions	Surveys and Questionnaires
PROPOSAL	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Research Questions	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

APPENDIX B: EMAILS SENT TO SOLICIT PARTICIPIATION

Email 1: Sent by Heather Lancaster on January 14, 2019:

This email was sent directly to all school principals within the participating school district as an initial attempt to gather participants.

Dear Principals,

I hope all is going well and you had an enjoyable holiday season with family and friends. I am reaching out to you as I am currently a doctoral student within the Department of Educational Leadership at ECU studying beginning teacher retention; specifically, which supports are effective in keeping our teachers in the classrooms. I have been approved by ECU IRB to begin collecting data for my dissertation research study and am now seeking approval from your LEA county office. I have been in contact with your Director of Educator Support and Leadership Development to discuss school participation and the research study details.

I would like to hold 3 (brief) different focus group interviews with beginning teachers and mentors/administrators within each school to gain feedback and data on induction supports. The purpose of holding three separate focus groups is to encourage discussions of common ideas/concerns, and to decrease power differentials.

Focus Group 1 will consist of beginning teachers with 2-3 years of experience

Focus Group 2 will consist of beginning teachers with 4-6 years of experience This will serve beneficial in carrying out common topics and concerns throughout the discussion.

Focus Group 3 will consist of the beginning teacher mentors, and Focus Group 4 will include the administrators.

I can send you the focus group questions and protocol if you would like. I can also send you the IRB approval letter from ECU.

I realize it is the end of the semester and you all are very busy with exams/preparing for spring semester. To show my appreciation for participants, I will provide a light lunch/dinner for beginning teachers, mentors, and administrators who are willing to sit down with me and answer a few questions regarding beginning teacher induction and supports. I hope that your BTs, mentors, and an administrator will be able to participate in these brief focus groups to help us better understand what supports/BT induction components are effective in retaining our BTs.

You may give me a call if that is best for you in discussing this. I sincerely appreciate you sharing this opportunity with your beginning teachers (year 2-6), BT mentors, and administration (principals, assistant principals). I look forward to hearing from you so we can set up a time for me to hold these brief focus groups during a day/time that is most convenient for you all. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Thank you!
Heather R. Lancaster

Email 2: Sent by Heather Lancaster on February 26, 2019:

This email was sent as a follow up to principals within the participating school district after the initial email and phone call attempts were made to encourage participation.

Dear Principal _____,

I reached out to you yesterday evening via email and/or phone. As I mentioned in my voicemail, **I am trying to retrieve contact information (name, email, phone number) for the beginning teachers (years 2-6) and beginning teacher mentors within your school.**

Through East Carolina University, I am conducting research towards my doctorate degree regarding effective beginning teacher induction components. We will hold the **focus groups either online, via phone, or face to face - whichever is most convenient for the participant and they will only last 15-20 minutes (10 questions).** All information (participant names, school names, etc.) will remain *anonymous*.

My research study has been *approved* by both East Carolina University and your school district.

Thank you for your commitment to education and improving student success. I look forward to talking with your teachers and mentors.

Best,
Heather R. Lancaster

Email 3: Sent by Heather Lancaster starting on February 28, 2019:

This email was sent directly to beginning teachers with 2-6 years of experience in the participating school district as their principals provided their names and contact information to the principal investigator.

Hi Teachers!

I hope all is well. I have recently corresponded with your principal in regards to my current research regarding teachers who are early in the classroom. The study focuses on effective beginning teacher induction components. We want to see which BT components are working.

I would like to conduct a focus group interview to speak with you and hear your feedback. For your convenience, the **focus groups can be conducted online (via Zoom), via phone**, or face to face - whichever you prefer. The focus group interview **will only last 15-20 minutes** (about 10 questions). Please know - participant name, school name, etc. will remain **anonymous** in the research and throughout the dissertation.

If this helps narrow some times for you all: *I am free before 9am M-F, between 1:10-3pm M-F, anytime after 5pm M-F and during the weekend.*

If some of you have a common planning time that I am free - this would be great. I encourage multiple participants per interview because it engages conversation and discussion.

If you would like to give me a call or text to schedule some times to meet, please do so - I have listed my cell number below for your convenience.

Thank you!
Heather

Email 4: Sent by Heather Lancaster starting on February 26, 2019.

This email was sent to beginning teacher mentors in the participating school district as their principals provided their names and contact information to the principal investigator.

Hi Mentors!

I hope all is well. I have recently corresponded with your principal in regards to my research. The study focuses on effective beginning teacher induction components. We want to see which BT components are working.

I would like to hold **2 different focus groups** - one for the BTs and 1 for the mentors. For your convenience, the **focus groups can be conducted online (via Zoom), via phone**, or face to face - whichever you prefer. The focus group interview **will only last 15-20 minutes** (about 10 questions). Please know - participant name, school name, etc. will remain **anonymous** in the research and throughout the dissertation.

Mentors - if you will please respond to this email, give me a call, or send me a text with some times that you are available to chat for about 15 minutes. If some of you have common planning periods, that may be best for many of us to meet at once.

If this helps narrow some times for you all: *I am free before 9am M-F, between 1:10-3pm M-F, anytime after 5pm M-F and during the weekend.*

If you would like to give me a call or text to schedule some times to meet, please do so - I have listed my cell number below for your convenience.

Thank you!
Heather

Google Form: Shared with School Administrators on March 5, 2019 by Heather Lancaster

The Google Form was created by the principal investigator and shared with principals in the participating LEA. This was not a part of our original research study method, but after few initial responses from principals, we considered this as a more convenient alternative for administration. Once shared with principals within the LEA, three principals provided responses for our study.

School Administrator Google Form:

The purpose of this study is to learn more about which resources and supports have been provided to beginning teachers within the designated LEA. We hope to learn more about which induction supports are effective in retaining early teachers.

Please provide your name (it will NOT be used in the study. Individual school names and participant names will remain confidential)

1. What are the most effective components of PCS beginning teacher induction program?
2. What resources are provided to you by the district in order to help guide and support the beginning teacher?
3. What suggestions do you present for beginning teacher induction supports to help retain teachers?
4. Do you believe there are external factors (location, proximity, community, etc.) that may help retain beginning teachers within this LEA?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Beginning Teacher Interviews/Focus Groups

Beginning teachers with 2-6 years of experience are being asked to participate in a one-on-one interview or focus group for a research study conducted through East Carolina University. Each focus group will be limited to 3-5 participants.

Interview/Focus Group Protocol

Welcome and Introduction:

You've been asked to participate in this research study because you are a beginning teacher with 2-6 years of experience. Thank you for taking time from your schedules to join us today. We anticipate this will last for no more than 45 minutes. Introduce facilitator(s). Ask participants to introduce themselves (first name only).

The purpose of this interview/focus group is to learn more about what resources and support systems have been provided to beginning teachers within the designated LEA. We hope to learn more about which induction supports are effective in retaining beginning teachers in the classroom, in both rural and urban school settings. We want to gain a more in depth understanding of how to retain teachers, especially beginning teachers, to motivate effective support systems. We will use information shared in this interview/focus group to evaluate and propose suggestions through a dissertation conducted through East Carolina University.

Notes will be taken during the interview/focus group and audio will be recorded to verify the accuracy of our notes; however, no identifying information will be associated with the written notes or the audio recording. Feedback received will be completely confidential.

Your participation is voluntary. You may stop participating at any time for any reason. In addition, you may skip any questions during the interview/focus group.

There are no right or wrong answers to the interview/focus group questions. We want to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear honest answers. In respect for each other, we ask that only one individual speak at a time in the focus group and that responses offered by all participants be kept confidential.

This interview/focus group is part of a research project that has been approved by the ECU Institutional Review Board (IRB). 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, Heather Lancaster, at hudsonh08@students.ecu.edu (Monday - Friday, between 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM).

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 252-744-2914 (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.

Engagement Questions:

1. What is the best part about being a teacher?
2. What is the most challenging part of being a teacher?

Research Sub-Questions:

1. Which components of your teacher preparation program do you feel effectively prepared you for the teaching career?
2. Which resources and/or support systems in your current school district are/were most helpful to you as a beginning teacher? If you have worked in another school district, which resources and/or support systems did you find most helpful?
3. Describe your relationship with your mentor.
4. How has this relationship impacted your beginning years in the teaching profession?
5. What improvements could be made to the teacher preparation program to better prepare beginning teachers for their careers in education?
6. What changes could be made to the beginning teacher induction program to help support teachers in years 1-5 within your school district?
7. Describe what contributed to your decision to remain in your school?
8. Are there external factors (location, environment, proximities, etc.) that have contributed to your decision to remain in your school?

Exit Questions:

3. Is there anything else you would like to say about what resources or support beginning teachers need in order to remain in the profession?

That concludes our session. Thank you. Your time is very much appreciated, and your insights have been very helpful.

Beginning Teacher Mentor and Administration Interviews/Focus Groups

Invite beginning teacher mentors and administrators to participate in an interview or focus group. Each focus group will be limited to 3-5 participants.

Focus Group Protocol/Guide

Welcome and Introduction:

You've been asked to participate in this interview/focus group because you are a mentor and/or administrator of a beginning teacher. Thank you for taking time from your schedules to join us today. We anticipate this will last for no more than 45 minutes. Introduce facilitator(s). Ask participants to introduce themselves (first name only).

The purpose of this interview/focus group is to learn more about what resources and support systems have been provided to beginning teachers within the designated LEA. We hope to learn more about which induction supports are effective in retaining beginning teachers in the classroom. We want to gain a more in depth understanding of how to retain teachers, especially beginning teachers, to motivate effective support systems. We will use information shared in this interview/focus group to evaluate and propose suggestions through a dissertation conducted through East Carolina University.

Notes will be taken during the interview/focus group and audio will be recorded to verify the accuracy of our notes; however, no identifying information will be associated with the written notes or the audio recording. Feedback received will be completely confidential.

Your participation is voluntary. You may stop participating at any time for any reason. In addition, you may skip any questions during the interview/focus group.

There are no right or wrong answers to the interview/focus group questions. We want to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear honest answers, even when your responses may not be in agreement with the rest of the group. In respect for each other, we ask that only one individual speak at a time in the group and that responses offered by all participants be kept confidential.

This interview/focus group is part of a research project that has been approved by the ECU Institutional Review Board (IRB). 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, Heather Lancaster, at HUDSONH08@STUDENTS.ECU.EDU (Monday - Friday, between 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM).

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 252-744-2914 (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.

Engagement Questions:

4. What are the most beneficial supports or resources available to you beginning teachers?
5. What are the challenges your beginning teachers face?

Research Sub-Questions:

1. What are the most effective components of PCPS beginning teacher induction program? Explain.
2. What resources are provided to you by the district in order to help guide and support the beginning teacher?
3. What suggestions do you present for beginning teacher induction supports in K12 settings to help retain teachers?
4. Do you believe there are external factors (not within classroom or school) that may help retain beginning teachers in this LEA?

Exit Questions:

6. Is there anything else you would like to say about what resources or support beginning teachers need in order to remain in the profession?

That concludes our session. Thank you. Your time is very much appreciated, and your insights have been very helpful.

