

ABSTRACT

Kelsey Murray Ballard, STUDYING THE EFFECTIVE USE OF MENTOR SUPPORTS FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS IN A RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOL (Under the direction of Dr. Marjorie Ringler). Department of Educational Leadership, May 2021.

Recruiting and retaining high quality teachers is vital to the success of public education (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In a small, rural North Carolina school district, it is consistently difficult to accomplish this important task. As a result, many school leaders resort to hiring teachers who do not have their teaching license and who did not complete a formal educator or teacher preparation program at a university. Such beginning teachers may be drastically unprepared to enter the profession. The aim of this study was to engage the school leaders and educators in a small, rural school district develop a common understanding and plan for supporting beginning teachers with the short-term goal of increasing teacher retention and a long-term goal of increasing student achievement. This study intends to provide insight on the following areas related to beginning teacher induction in rural school districts: preservice preparation changes, common challenges for beginning teachers, supports for beginning teachers and an idea of teacher support founded on the ideas of focus, collaboration and reflection. This study also was designed to develop the leadership capacity of the building principal, who was also the researcher. The researcher implemented the study and will share the knowledge gained, as it was, and it still being used, to improve the current beginning teacher induction program at this rural middle school.

STUDYING THE EFFECTIVE USE OF MENTOR SUPPORTS FOR BEGINNING
TEACHERS IN A RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

Kelsey Murray Ballard

May, 2021

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DEDICATION

For my sweet husband, Cline. You are my knight in shining armor. You are a tangible reminder that "...He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:21).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is a testament to God's grace and goodness in my life. The Lord has lavished his blessings on me and I'm so unworthy. The completion of the doctoral degree and this dissertation would not have been possible without the love, encouragement and support of my family.

Cline, you are my knight and shining armor. When I see you, I'm reminded of God's faithfulness. There is no one else I'd rather spend my days with. Thanks for loving me so well and always believing in my dreams. Your sacrifices for me do not go unnoticed. I love you!

Daddy, you always come to my rescue and help me solve the insolvable. No one can fix things like you can. I'm a leader because you taught me to stand for what is right and fair to and protect the underdog. The work ethic you instilled in me has carried me far in life. I love you!

Mama, your love and encouragement get me through my days. You always have the right words to calm my worries and fears. You taught me that kindness is never wrong, and it is okay to "stop and smell the roses." I feel your love to my core and I'm thankful you cover me in prayer. This dissertation is probably the only paper of mine that you have not had to proofread. (HA!) I love you!

Lesley, you make me so proud to be your big sister. You're such an encouragement in my life and a joy to be around. Thanks for loving me so well. I will always have your back. I love you!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Recruiting and retaining high quality teachers is vital to the success of public education (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In a small, rural North Carolina school district, it is consistently difficult to accomplish this important task. As a result, many school leaders resort to hiring teachers who do not have their teaching license and who did not complete a formal educator or teacher preparation program at a university. Such beginning teachers may be drastically unprepared to enter the profession. In situations where a beginning teacher has been hired with a teaching license already secured, they often still need additional supports that schools and districts are not prepared or equipped to provide (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

The aim of this study was to help education leaders in a small, rural school district develop a common understanding and plan for supporting beginning teachers with the short-term goal of increasing teacher retention and a long-term goal of increasing student achievement. This study intended to provide insight on the following areas related to beginning teacher induction in rural school districts: preservice preparation changes, common challenges for beginning teachers, supports for beginning teachers and an idea of teacher support founded on the ideas of focus, collaboration and reflection. The knowledge gained through this study was used to improve the current beginning teacher induction program at this rural middle school.

Background of the Problem

This study explored several problems facing many schools in rural, eastern North Carolina centered around finding and keeping highly qualified teachers. Schools and school systems are having great difficulty recruiting highly qualified teachers due to the lack of economic opportunities and lower pay. Rural school districts have historically struggled with recruitment and retention of teachers (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010)

Often times, rural school systems have to resort to hiring later entry teachers, meaning teachers who do not have a teaching license or education degree. There are cases where these lateral entry teachers become excellent teachers, but typically it takes more time, effort and resources. The increase in the amount of time, effort and resources is primarily because, by definition, lateral entry teachers did not spend four years at a university enrolled in teacher preparation classes, working towards their teaching license (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2008). School and district record keeping, as well as state files, document the increasing number of lateral entry teachers entering the educational profession. School systems often track this data and use it as a springboard for conversations with principals and community leaders. There are also typically several paid positions, such as district beginning teacher mentors, within school systems where the daily work is primarily focused on building the capacity of beginning teachers.

In addition to having a hard time finding highly qualified teachers, educators entering the profession are often leaving after a few years. Teacher turnover is higher in the educational field than compared to other occupations and professions, especially in the first few years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Ingersoll & Perda, 2010). Rizga (2015) shares that the cycle of recruiting and training teachers, only for many of them to leave the profession within a few years, costs the United States around \$2 billion dollars each year. This cycle affects smaller and more rural school systems harder, as the resources of books, materials and staff development becomes limited due to the continual costs of replacing teachers (Portner, 2008).

Rural school districts have a higher percentage of beginning teachers (9.8%) than do midsize cities and suburbs (8.9%) (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012). Rural districts have to carry the load of decreasing new teacher retention rates at a greater weight due to the higher concentration

of new teachers (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012). Rural schools seem to have a revolving door of new, beginning teachers. This impacts the continuity of education for all students as well as impacting the school district as a whole. This creates a complex, yet custom problem from one rural district to the next as schools and districts must customize their unique teaching environment to the resources on hand (Osterholm et al., 2006).

A lack of guidance and support are the top reasons many teachers give for leaving the profession after only a few years. Goldrick et al. (2012) add that new teachers are unable to grow and develop their instructional practices, as well as managerial and behavioral practices without proper support and guidance. First-year teachers are expected to enter the profession demonstrating skills needed to successfully perform as a classroom teacher. Many of these teachers have only been provided general training in educational programs. For the teachers that have gone through university preparation programs, they have been exposed to more simulated teaching experiences than real-life classroom experiences. Simulations and university courses do not compare to being in an actual classroom considering the variations in school settings, cultures and expectations and the slow acclimation process (Brock & Grady, 2007).

Three years is the average timeline for beginning teacher induction programs. Mentoring, coaching and other supports for beginning teachers are continued over this timeframe as the confidence levels and teaching abilities of beginning teachers are stretched and grown (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Goldrick (2016) reports that 29 states require mentoring support during the first year of teaching and 18 of those 29 states require the support to continue over subsequent years. Considering that the expectations across and among states vary, it is not surprising that ineffective programs could be a result of the lack of consistency. Induction programs not carried

out with comprehensive plans and support can frustrated educators and also impact the beginning teachers' effectiveness (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

The 2001 No Child Left Behind Act increased accountability on teachers and increased the level of rigor expected in the classroom (Bush, 2001). This act also increased the standard expected of districts to recruit and retain only highly qualified teachers (Bush, 2001). In 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which took the place of NCLB. ESSA gave more control back to the states (Klein, 2016). While states received more control back, ESSA still kept test scores and accountability through performance evaluations as a major factor. As a result of this continued testing for students, the pressure to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers was still of top concern (Kumashiro, 2015).

For the local context of this study, the school system and school at the focus of this study is within small, rural county in North Carolina with a population of 56,000 during the 2010 census. There is a strong agricultural base in the county, but also increasing advanced manufacturing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). According to the census data, 10% of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher and the average income in 2016 was \$32,298. Also, in 2016, 24% of the county's residents were identified as living in poverty. The race breakdown is as follows: 57.4% Black, 38.8% White, 3.7% Hispanic/Latino and 0.1% other (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

The local district studied has consistently hovered around 5,900 enrolled students over the past three years (see Table 1). In 2014-2015, there were 5,854 students. In 2015-2016, there were 5,953 students. In 2016-2017, there were 5944 students. Also, consistently over the past three years, there have been 14 schools making up the district (NC School Report Cards, 2018).

Table 1

District Enrollment

Year	District Enrollment
2014-2015	5,854 students
2015-2016	5,953 students
2016-2017	5,944 students
2017-2018	5,853 students
2018-2019	5,753 students
2019-2020	5,584 students

The specific school included in the study has approximately 24 teachers. There are 11 of the 24 teachers that are African-American, and the other 13 are Caucasian. Of the 24 teachers, 11 do not have their full teaching license. This means that roughly 46% of the teachers in this school are either completing lateral entry course work, in the beginning teacher program or serving as substitute teachers because of lack of certifications. This study will focus on four mentors, with years of experience being 26, 12, 10 and 4. The beginning teachers included in this study include 4 in year one, 5 in year two and 2 in year three. This is a total of 4 mentors and 11 beginning teachers.

Within the district, the number of beginning teachers each year has consistently been between 80 and 100 with around 30 beginning teachers leaving the district each year. In 2016, 32 of 94 beginning teachers (34.04%) left the district. In 2017, 32 of 83 beginning teachers (38.55%) left the district. In 2018, 31 of 97 beginning teachers (31.96%) left the district (see Table 2) (K. Jones, personal interview, June 24, 2019).

Naming and Framing the Problem of Practice

Colleges of education report that fewer and fewer people are enrolling in their programs. They also report that between the 2007-2008 and 2015-2016 academic years, there was a 23 percent decline in the number of people completing teacher-preparation programs (Will, 2018). If the universities are not able to train the next round of teachers because they are not enrolling in educational programs of study, the next generation of teachers will be more underprepared than ever. Thus, the training and in-service preparation will be left to local school districts and the work of their beginning teacher induction programs. As a result, these beginning teacher induction programs will need to function effectively and efficiently, providing beginning teachers with the tools they need to meet the needs of students every day. Given the complexities

Table 2

District Beginning Teacher Turnover

Year	Beginning Teacher Turnover/Total Number of Beginning Teachers = Percentage
2016	32/94 = 34.04%
2017	32/83 = 38.55%
2018	31/97 = 31.96%
2019	Data Not Available
2020	Data Not Available

of teaching and the rigorous instruction required in order to train students to become career and college ready, this is no easy task. School districts and state departments of education will be forced to devote increasing resources to building the capacity in teachers in the coming years as the work is no longer being shared with Colleges of education as commonly as before.

Without the training through colleges of education, principals in the local schools will have to purposefully and intentionally support beginning teachers. The efforts on the principal's behalf have an end goal of increasing retention rates. Intermediate effects of this will be that the district saves money when teacher turnover decreases, but more importantly, academic instruction is strengthened when teachers are satisfied with their job and decide to remain in the profession and school (du Plessis, 2017). This study investigated ways to redesign induction programs to address this problem of practice.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to address the lack of high-quality teachers in a rural middle school by improving the supports in place for beginning teachers. This was done by assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the current induction program at this middle school. Then, the researcher collaborated with stakeholders to design a plan for improvement for the induction program utilizing the data analysis findings. As a result of the improvements to the induction program, beginning teachers are predicted to feel more supported and therefore remain in the teaching profession, increasing teacher retention.

The researcher conducted an action research study centered around beginning teachers and their supports. Interviews were qualitative data and surveys were quantitative data, thus there was a need for both methods within the cycles of this study. Cycle 1 included surveys for beginning teachers and mentor teachers to assess the previous year's beginning teacher induction

program. Cycle 2 included interviews with beginning teachers and mentors to probe deeper into the survey responses and certain themes that emerged. After the data from the surveys and interviews was gathered and analyzed, a change was made to the current induction program in an effort to yield positive change. This change was monitored and then, Cycle 3 began with a survey to gather data on the change. Cycle 3 concluded with recommendations for next steps and future changes to the induction program as a result of all the data analysis.

Interviews were chosen because this form of research tends to focus on the “quality of a particular activity rather than on how often it occurs or how it might be evaluated” (Mertler, 2019, p. 77). One of the goals for this study was to be able to draw conclusions from the data that yield recommended solutions and best practices for comparable schools regarding beginning teacher support and beginning teacher program design. The outcomes will hopefully guide future work in related fields across similar schools, districts and states. Surveys were also chosen because this type of research allowed for numerical data to be calculated and thus generalized into results. These surveys, completed by beginning teachers and their mentors, were much more structured than qualitative research (Mertler, 2019). The results of the surveys and interviews, along with suggestions for improvement from other literature sources were used to guide the changes made to the current induction program. After the revised induction program was implemented for a period of time, beginning teachers and mentors were interviewed again in order to assess the success of the revisions and determine the next steps for revision and improvement.

The study also developed the current beginning teacher induction at the rural middle school with a goal to deepen the skill set of beginning teachers through on-going mentorship as a form of professional development. The outcome yielded successful methods to support and guide

beginning teachers so that job satisfaction and job productivity increase with beginning teachers, thus increasing the likelihood of retention. External factors that impacted this study include, but are not limited to, teachers, students, administrators, school support staff, funding and resource availability, district supports and funding, and local and state assessment requirements and data. The school is specifically a rural, Title I school in eastern North Carolina. The school enrollment, sixth through eighth grade, includes approximately 350 students with seventy percent being minority students, led by around 25 certified staff members.

Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Foundation

Conzemius and O'Neill's framework relating focus, collaboration and reflection to leadership capacity was used throughout this study to guide the mentor and beginning teacher work. They decided to build their framework into one of the most recognizable shapes, a triangle (see Figure 1). The top vertex of the triangle has the word FOCUS written. The right vertex has the word COLLABORATION, and the left vertex has the word REFLECTION. Written on the right side of the triangle is the word Capacity and on the left side of the triangle is the word Leadership (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2005).

The main ideas of this framework were to turn teachers into collaborative teachers who understand their role (focus), who work well with others (collaboration) and who often think about how they can improve in their work (reflection). When improving the current induction model in the middle school used in this study, mentors built beginning teachers' capacity by first helping them to define their goal, hence *focus*. Then, the mentor was key in helping beginning teachers learn strategies to better collaborate with others and learn from one another, hence *collaboration*. Finally, the beginning teachers modeled reflective practices after learning from their mentor, hence *reflection*. If a beginning teacher can learn to do these things well, thus the

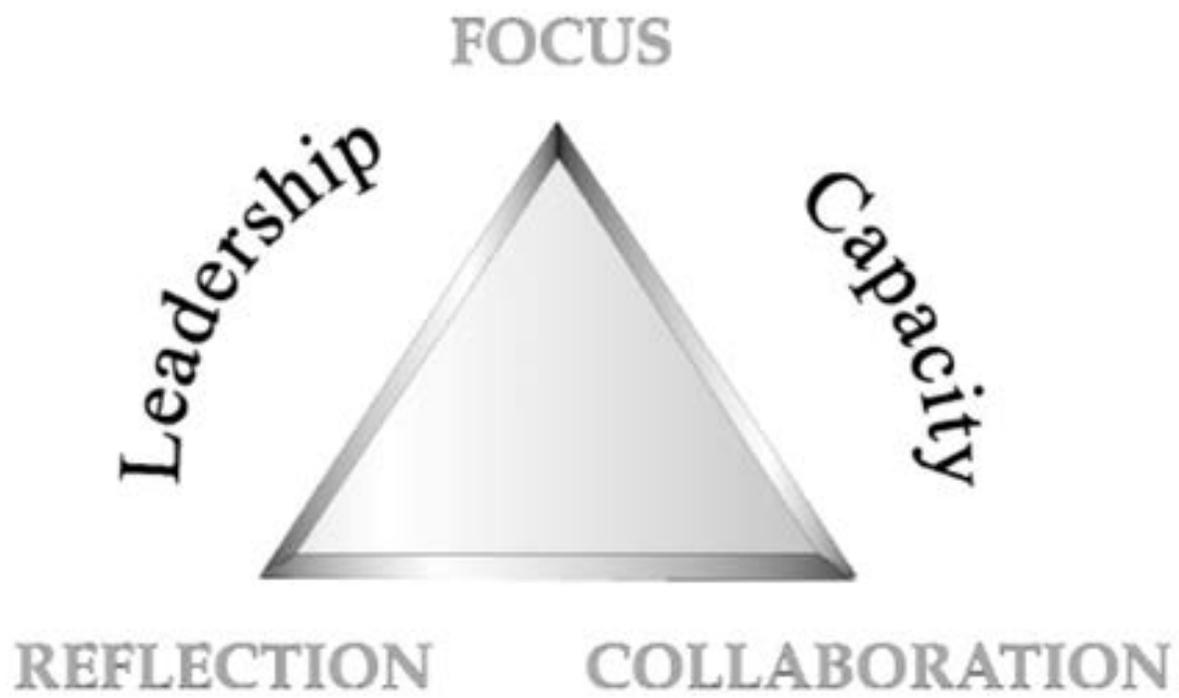


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

three base concepts of Conzemius and O'Neill's framework, a beginning teacher will have a successful basis for teaching and leading that should make them feel empowered and effective in their classroom, and thus increase the likelihood of them remaining in the teaching profession (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2005).

This framework flows with the type of research used in this study, Collaborative Action Research. Sagor (1992) defines collaborative action research as “a process that enables teachers to improve the teaching-learning process while also contributing to the development of their own profession” (p. 6). Action research is undertaken by researchers who want to know whether they can improve their own situation. It is different than other types of research where the researcher just publishes reports that they *hope* will one day be beneficial to someone. Action researchers, in contrast, look at what they themselves are or should be doing (Sagor, 1992).

Study Questions

The questions for the study were:

1. What elements of mentor support are most effective from the perception of beginning teachers in a rural middle school setting?
2. What elements make an effective beginning teacher induction program in a rural middle school setting from the perception of a mentor teacher?
3. How does the help mentors provide beginning teachers in the areas of focus, collaboration and reflection increase the sense of effectiveness of beginning teachers?
4. What are the various contributions mentors made that helped retain teachers?
5. What did the researcher learn about the leadership skills required to implement an induction program in a rural middle school?

The researcher's goal in asking these questions was to determine what aspects of the current beginning teacher induction program were helpful and which are not. Next, the researcher used the data gathered to redesign the school beginning teacher induction program to address the unique needs of teachers in rural settings. From there, the researcher identified additional needs and supports that would be beneficial to include in future revisions to the beginning teacher induction program.

Scope and Delimitations

This study was conducted in a rural 6th, 7th and 8th grade middle school in eastern North Carolina. This school is a low performing school and is also a Title I school. One hundred percent of the students receive free breakfast and lunch as a result and 64.6% of students are labeled "economically disadvantaged". This school was chosen because of the high number of beginning teachers and also because of the turnover in beginning teachers within the district over the same amount of time.

At this school there were 5 6th grade teachers, 4 7th grade teachers and 6 8th grade teachers. There were also 2 exceptional children's teachers, 6 enhancement teachers (Music, Business & Marketing, Computer Studies, STEM, AIG and Health/PE), one multi-classroom lead teacher and a host of teacher assistants, support staff members and custodial/clerical staff members. There were around 45 employees in total at that school. At this school only 37.5% of teachers had been teaching more than 10 years. The school had close to 350 students. There were 6 school buses which transported students at this school, each carrying around 45 students back and forth to school each day. This school operated on a traditional calendar. The teachers in this school worked hard daily to improve teaching and learning so that student progress would increase. Exceptional Children's supports, including modified lessons and assignments, as well

as behavior charts and plans were utilized by many teachers, regardless of beginning teacher status or not.

Definition of Key Terms

Beginning teacher or new teacher - A teacher in a public school setting who has been teaching less than a total of three complete school years (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

District - Local education agency, often referred to as LEAs (NCDPI, 2019).

High quality teacher - A high quality middle teacher, as defined by the state of North Carolina: “a teacher must have obtained an appropriate license for the core academic subjects taught, and demonstrate subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading/language arts, writing, mathematics, and other areas of the basic middle school curriculum by passing the teacher licensing exams (Praxis II) required by the state” (NCDPI, 2019).

Induction - Induction is a professional development program is designed to provide support, guidance and orientation for beginning teachers and often includes a mentoring component (Promoting Teacher Induction and Mentoring Brief, 2015).

Lateral Entry - A teacher who enters the teaching profession by an alternative pathway, meaning not through a university preparation program (NCDPI, 2019).

LEA - Local Education Association (NCDPI, 2019).

Mentor - An experienced teacher who is willing to be a resource for beginning teachers, sharing knowledge, helpful tips and expertise regarding the teaching profession (Crewson & Fisher, 1997).

Coaching - Consistent and immediate feedback given to a teacher by the same person on a regular basis through classroom observations where strengths and weakness are looked for and

then conversations surrounding these findings are held at a later time in order to build teaching capacity in individuals (Spoon et al., 2018).

Veteran teacher - A teacher who has completed more than 3 consecutive and whole years in a public school setting (Spoon et al., 2018).

Assumptions

In this study, the researcher has assuming the following:

- All mentors want to help the beginning teachers; not doing it for an ulterior motive.
- Beginning teachers and mentors are doing their best work each day.
- Beginning teachers want to get better and move to master teacher status as they become career teachers.

The researcher has assumed that the mentors who participating in this studying are participating for the right reasons, meaning that they really want to help beginning teachers improve and remain in the profession. This is a fair assumption one could include because some mentor roles are paid positions. While the pay is most often very little, this study assumes that none of the mentors are serving in mentor roles for the extra money alone.

The researcher has also assumed that beginning teachers and mentors come to work each day, ready to work hard and do their best work. While each person is human, and along with being human comes sickness and days where motivation is hard to find, the researcher is assumed that the desire to do a good job each day is found within all beginning teachers and mentors.

Similar to the notion that beginning teachers come to work each day ready to perform their best work is the assumption that beginning teachers have a desire to become master

teachers. The researcher assumed that the beginning teachers involved in the study see themselves as career teachers and do not view teaching as a placeholder for the time-being.

Limitations

The research for this study was impacted by the fact that the researcher was also the leader of the school. Many times teachers, especially beginning teachers, those new to the profession, do not feel like they can be honest with their supervisors. Also, many beginning teachers have a desire to please. They do not want to be seen as someone who complains or has negative things to say, thus they may not present entirely honest answers and feedback. Another limitation could have been that if the leader, in this case the school principal, and researcher, was a cause of any problem or issue, the beginning teachers would not have shared that with the researcher herself as though that would seem inappropriate. Thus, there may be some information that was not shared due to the inability for it to remain anonymously contributed.

Another limitation for this study was that only one school was used to conduct the research. While some district data was used, including interviews of district staff members, the teacher and student data primarily utilized for this study was from one school. Not only does this narrow the scope, but it also raises the question of if the results can only be applied to similar schools in rural eastern North Carolina or if the generalizations formed can be applied across different types and settings of schools.

Significance of the Study

It is important that each year's new teachers be as prepared as possible to teach students with rigor and high-quality lessons. Therefore, the significance of this study was ultimately to grow students' knowledge in rural locations in order to better prepare them for college, careers and the military. In order for students to grow, those individuals teaching the students must grow

in their knowledge and pedagogy. Schools in rural areas will become increasingly poorer, unhealthy communities without the influence of highly effective teachers guiding students to become knowledgeable, productive and well-rounded citizens.

Many schools in North Carolina have issues centered around finding and keeping highly qualified teachers, especially those in rural school districts. Schools and school systems are having great difficulty recruiting highly qualified teachers. Often times, school systems have to resort to hiring later entry teachers who do not have a teaching license despite the fact that lateral entry teachers leave the teaching profession at a rate of 79 percent greater than other teachers (UNC-Chapel Hill, 2017). In addition to having a hard time finding highly qualified teachers, educators entering the profession are often leaving after a few years. Teacher turnover is higher in the educational field than compared to other occupations and professions, especially in the first few years (Ingersoll & Perda, 2010; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Three years is the typical timeline for beginning teacher induction programs. Mentoring, coaching and other supports for beginning teachers are continued over this timeframe as the confidence levels and teaching abilities of beginning teachers are stretched and grown (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Goldrick (2016) reports that 29 states, North Carolina being one of them, require mentoring support during the first year of teaching and 18 of those 29 states require the support to continue over subsequent years. Considering that the expectations across and among states vary, it is not surprising that ineffective programs could be a result of the lack of consistency. Induction programs not carried out with comprehensive plans and support can frustrated educators and also impact the beginning teachers' effectiveness (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

This is even more difficult in rural areas as teacher shortages are compounded in hard to fill subject areas, such as mathematics and physical and computer science (Goodpaster et al., 2012). One key challenge for beginning teachers in rural areas is learning to “fit into” the community in order to be successful. Rural communities tend to be less private, and thus it is harder for beginning teachers to manage the social aspects within and outside of the school (Goodpaster et al., 2012). This can be better understood through the lens of the multiplex relations concept of social capital theory. This theory refers to situations where people are linked in more than one area, typically found in rural communities (Goodpaster et al., 2012). In these multiplex relational situations, resources, information and obligations from one relationship can be used in other relationships, thus making it hard to separate a teaching career from a personal life. It is hard to separate these two as overlap in relationships commonly occurs (e.g., as a teacher, sports’ league coach, friend of the family). Thus, teachers who are not familiar with the norms in rural communities may not be prepared for working with these dynamics (Goodpaster et al., 2012).

Rizga (2015) shares that the cycle of recruiting and training teachers, only for many of them to leave the profession within a few years, costs the United States around \$2 billion dollars each year. This cycle effects smaller and more rural school systems harder, as the resources of books, materials and staff development becomes limited due to the continual costs of replacing teachers (Portner, 2008).

Principals of rural schools must operate differently than those in urban settings as they face geographic isolation, poor working conditions of teachers, lack of resources, and poor community involvement. From a social justice lens, it is crucial that leaders in rural and isolated areas take advantage of opportunities for change, improvement and educational advancement.

This is because parents and students “may have little opinion but to accept the educational provision on offer from the local school” (du Plessis, 2017, pp. 2-3). While the options may be more limited in rural areas, principals in these areas will still be expected to ensure all students demonstrate academic achievement through growth and proficiency. Thus, rural principals must balance leadership responsibilities and goals with building trust and relationships with staff members. In addition to relationships and teacher motivation, principals must ensure the staff members are growing in their professional and pedagogical skills. Principals must ensure there are job-embedded and real-time opportunities for teachers to increase their skill set but also connect with others professionally, be that observing other teachers, or reflecting with others. Because the need is so great and urgent, principals of rural schools cannot be complacent but must take well-thought-out steps to make rural schools as attractive and effective as possible (du Plessis, 2017).

All of these unique factors, specific to rural schools, cause an issue of equity for students and teachers. We expect students in rural, low income homes to perform at the same level as students from affluent homes. While society realizes home conditions vary greatly among students and regions, it seems little is being done to ensure all students have the same access inside the classroom. People talk about closing the achievement gap and improving education, but this cannot happen without great teachers. The best school principal cannot close the achievement gap and increase student learning without high quality teachers. Teachers also need appropriate professional development to strengthen their skills. All of these would create a more equitable opportunity for rural students to succeed by decreasing the barrier of continued access to high quality teachers. The aim of this study is to help educators in a small, rural school improve their plan for supporting beginning teachers with the long-term goal of increasing

student achievement and the short-term goal of increasing teacher retention. Recruiting and retaining high quality teachers is vital to the success of public education and this is consistently difficult to accomplish in many small, rural North Carolina school districts.

Summary

Recruiting and retaining high quality teachers is vital to the success of public education as colleges of education are reporting that fewer and fewer people are enrolling in teacher preparation programs within their colleges (Will, 2018). In a small, rural North Carolina school district, it is consistently difficult to accomplish this important task. Hiring people to serve as teachers who have not obtained teaching licenses or completed university preparation programs sets schools, and ultimately students at a huge disadvantage. These teachers often still need many additional supports that schools and districts are not prepared or equipped to provide (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

The aim of this study was to help educator leaders in a small, rural school district develop a common understanding and plan for supporting beginning teachers with the short-term goal of increasing teacher retention and a long-term goal of increasing student achievement. Through the following literature review, this study intended to provide insight on the following areas related to beginning teacher induction: a historical look at preservice preparation, common challenges for beginning teachers, supports for beginning teachers and a theory relating to the needs of beginning teachers.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter contains a review of the literature synthesized relating to the study. The purpose of this study is to address the lack of high-quality teachers in a rural middle school by improving the supports in place for beginning teachers. This will be done by assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the current induction program at this middle school. Then, the researcher will collaborate with stakeholders to design a plan for improvement to the induction program utilizing the data analysis findings. As a result of the improvements to the induction program, beginning teachers are predicted to feel more supported and therefore remain in the teaching profession, increasing teacher retention. The following topics will be discussed: Theoretical Foundation, Policies Impacting Beginning Teacher Preparation, Challenges for Beginning Teachers, Challenges for Beginning Teachers in Rural Schools, Supports for Beginning Teachers, and Summary and Conclusions.

National data highlights that the average cost for a teacher leaving a school district is \$11,000 due to the investment efforts spend annually on teachers. In addition, at least 14% of K-12 teachers either leave the profession or switch schools annually (Kono, 2012). Severe teacher shortages are confronting public schools, and attrition of teachers is a concern for administrators as teacher turnover is higher in the first few years than turnover rates in other professions (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Ingersoll & Perda, 2010). Schools with students from low income families in difficult communities often have the highest new teacher attrition rates (Graziano, 2005). For these same communities riddled with low income families, when the costs of teacher turnover is calculated as a percentage of the school district budget, rural school districts are significantly more impacted by these turnovers (Reeves, 2003). The importance of exhausting all

options to retain teachers is extremely heightened by this significant financial burden imposed on rural school districts (Barnes et al., 2007).

Dr. Rebecca Anhorn (2008), a professor in the teacher education programs at Minot State University in Minot, North Dakota has even referred to education as a profession that “eats their young” (p. 15). This is such a concern in North Carolina that \$7.7 million from federal Race to the Top funds have been used to focus efforts towards improving beginning teachers (Bastian & Marks, 2017). Teacher effectiveness has moved to the top of many policy agendas as the art of teaching has become one of the most important school-related factors in student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Teacher preparation and development are the key foundational stones to developing effective teachers to increase student knowledge and skills.

The implementation of teacher induction programs is an option for rural school districts given the above average numbers of new teachers along with the increasing teacher turnover trend (Kang & Berliner, 2012). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) suggest that effective induction programs for beginning teachers can increase teacher retention. Although, the reality of limited resources and of conditions unique to retaining teachers in rural settings makes additional challenges for these districts to navigate (Eppley, 2009).

Successful teaching in a rural setting looks different than successful teaching in an urban setting. If rural teachers do not understand and connect with the unique community of students, they will have greater difficulties teaching them, as managing the social aspects of rural teaching is a necessity for success (Goodpaster et al., 2012). Rural educators have to find ways to assimilate into the communities around them. Also, teachers in rural districts must deal with lower salary levels than teachers in larger, urban districts (Goodpaster et al., 2012). Rural districts also face challenges including geographic isolation and limited resources, creating more

injustice for these teachers and students (Eppley, 2009). In conclusion, if teacher induction programs focus on unique solutions to these challenges, ensuring the right fit of the community and school, positive outcomes may result (Kang & Berliner, 2012).

Theoretical Foundation

Construction builders lay a foundation before building a house, and building great teachers is similar. In an effort to get the foundational experience for beginning teachers, their induction program, right beginning teacher induction programs have undergone some change over the last forty years. The sections below outline some of the major changes since the 1980s. Then, the next sections detail a framework for beginning teacher induction, founded upon the ideas of focus, collaboration and reflection, necessary components to building leadership capacity in each teacher and school (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2005).

In the mid-1980s, expectations in education became more demanding on school systems. The expectation was for the level of rigor in the standards and for student academic achievement to increase rapidly. Instead of focusing on the leadership of a school alone, the focus shifted to the connection between the leadership of the school and the school's success (Leithwood et al., 1994). Principals, the leaders of schools, became identified as instructional leaders, specifically leaders of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy (Dufour, 2002; Hoerr, 2015).

In the early 1990s, there was a shift in which instructional leaders began giving more power to teachers and thus sharing leadership roles (Hallinger, 2003). Bass (1999) moved the conversation towards an idea of transformative leadership as it related to sharing power, increasing collaboration and utilizing teamwork. Continuing with this idea, Conzemius and O'Neill (2005) developed a framework that would be easy for educators to remember. They used a shape that would be extremely familiar to educators, a triangle, which by default only has three

vertices, keeping it simple with three main ideas. Their goal was for their framework to help leaders see the big picture and keep the large ideas in mind most often. Whether working with small groups at individual schools or districts and entire school communities as a whole, their objective was to keep the framework simple and thus easy to recall (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2005).

Conzemius and O'Neill built their framework into one of the most recognizable shapes, a triangle (see Figure 1).

The top vertex of the triangle has the word FOCUS written. The right vertex has the word COLLABORATION, and the left vertex has the word REFLECTION. Written on the right side of the triangle is the word Capacity and on the left side of the triangle is the word Leadership. The designers intended for the word FOCUS to represent several things. First, when most readers think of the word focus, they imagine a clear vision. Maybe one is defining where they would like to be, ensuring one stays true to their core beliefs and values. The writers also intended for the word focus to connect readers to goal setting, understanding that if one establishes clear and measurable goals, they will be able to narrow in, focusing on obtaining the goals (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2005).

When defining the right vertex, Conzemius and O'Neill (2005) understood that COLLABORATION was a requirement for effective team functioning. Collaboration gives a notion between all partners that everyone is working together towards a common goal and each person has a role to play. From the partnerships between students, teachers, parents, the school and the community, effective collaboration is essential as action plans and strategies accompany goals and a sense of trust is developed as multiple partners work together to reach a common goal (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2005).

The word REFLECTION at the left vertex reminds readers of the importance of looking backwards. Pausing, to assess and think through what has taken place is key to seeing improvements made. During a time of reflection, it is expected that one would look at quantitative, qualitative and intuitive data as part of the assessment. Reflection is also critical in order to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and in order to provide feedback to various stakeholders, such as parents, students, school members and the community (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2005).

When reading from left to right, the words on the sides of the triangle read Leadership Capacity. The message intended for readers to understand by the selection of these words is that when teams focus together on data through goal setting and monitoring, the shared responsibility for improving student learning increases. Designers understood that leadership capacity can refer to an organization's ability to continue towards goal competition even when crucial individuals leave or are replaced. This can be accomplished when teams realize that structures should be developed which allow everyone to be pulled into leadership. Namely, all should be involved with the reflective inquiry tasks, ongoing dialogue and shared responsibility. Conzemius and O'Neill (2005) go further to define what they mean when using the word all, naming students, parents, teachers, staff members, administrators and the community. These facets are important because as the leadership capacity grows within a school, the school's culture becomes resilient in times of change as members hold true to never stopping the learning, changing and improving (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2005).

In schools across America, principals are often moved frequently, specifically one writer says that only about half of beginning principals remain in the same job five years later (Viadero, 2009). When Conzemius and O'Neill (2005) developed their framework, specifically focusing

on their consistent theme of shared leadership, it could be implied that they were thinking about how to overcome some of the challenges facing schools when leaders change. Perhaps Conzemius and O'Neill understood that if school building leaders and districts develop and train beginning teachers to share leadership and to navigate teaching well, the impact of principals changing would not completely disrupt the learning environment. Ensuring that a principal change is as least damaging to the teaching taking place is the ultimate goal. If this can be ensured, then teachers would still feel supported and well-equipped to continue teaching, even if a beloved principal leaves or moves on to other positions.

One could also connect Conzemius and O'Neill's framework to the concept of building beginning teachers into collaborative teachers who understand their role (focus), who work well with others (collaboration) and who often think about how they can improve in their work (reflection). If a beginning teacher learns to do these things well, thus the three base concepts of their framework, a beginning teacher is going to have a successful basis for teaching and leading that should make them feel empowered and effective in their classroom, and thus increase the likelihood of them remaining in the teaching profession (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2005).

Policies Impacting Beginning Teacher Preparation

The issue of teacher preparation and what skills are needed in order to properly educate students has been widely discussed throughout the 21st Century. In the United States specifically, at the turn of the 20th century, only 5% of U.S. jobs required specialized knowledge and skills (Darling-Hammond, 2010). At the present time, this percentage has grown to at least 70% and increasing. Our original system of schooling students may have worked considering only 5% needed specialized skills, but that does not hold true in present times (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Since 1980, federal administrations in the United States have challenged the notion that there is an expert system for teaching and a relevant necessary knowledge base (Darling-Hammond, 2017). It has become commonplace for people to feel as those entering the teaching profession are less capable and/or intelligent than those who choose other professions. Since this time, legislation providing alternative pathways to entering the teaching field have sprung up. Accordingly, a few weeks of pre-service preparation has been accepted as sufficient for licensure in lieu of previous requirements of at least four years of university-level preservice preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2017). This increase in pathways into teaching has come under the name of ‘removing barriers’ to those wanting to teach. In return, it has lowered the standards for teachers entering communities that offer fewer incentives, commonly those with lower salaries, poorer working conditions and students from low-income households (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Several of the alternate routes to teaching programs require a two-year service commitment but, after that time, individuals are free to leave the career. This is leading to a trend of two-year teaching stents being seen as a ‘waystation en route to a real job’ (Darling-Hammond, 2017, p. 293). The instructional gaps for students under alternatively licensed teachers widen, as not only are these teachers substantially lacking in the preservice training realm, but typically they receive significantly less ongoing professional development and support working in these high-needs schools (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

In contrast to this decline of the preparation level of preservice teachers in the US, other nations have seen improvements in their educational preparation services. Singapore changed their mindset from one of just getting teachers, to one where they are focused on providing teachers of quality (Darling-Hammond, 2017). In Finland, all teachers hold at least a 2-year master’s degree which encompasses strong pedagogical preparation, with most eventually

pursuing PhDs but remaining in teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2017). In addition, Canada is supporting teachers financially while they are receiving their training. The common theme through these other nations, in contrast to school systems in the United States and North Carolina specifically, is the high compensation of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Induction, defined as formal and structured staff development programs, is usually provided within the first few years of teaching (Wong, 2004; Wong et al., 2005). Wong et al. (2005) described induction as “a process, a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain new teachers and seamlessly progresses them into a lifelong learning program” (p. 42). The work that takes place during this induction period often influences and defines a teacher’s behaviors, mindset and skillset for their entire career (Fry, 2007).

Induction programs became increasingly popular in the United States during the 1980s as school systems became to pay attention to the growing needs of beginning teachers. As a result, induction programs were born out of an effort to provide support for teachers within those first three crucial years (Brock & Grady, 1998). Teacher induction programs and teacher retention rates affect one another. Ingersoll (2012) agrees that induction programs can increase teacher retention rates, but it is dependent upon the quality of the individual induction programs.

Induction programs have flourished throughout public education because school systems have noticed the relationship between induction programs and teacher retention. School system induction programs continue to evolve as their work is on-going as they continue tweaking processes to implement programs to develop high quality teachers (Potemski & Matlach, 2014). Huling-Austin (1990) noted a few concepts that contribute to the success of any induction program: improvement of teacher performance, increased retention, promotion of personal and

professional growth, improvement of attitudes towards the teaching profession, following induction and certification guidelines, and adaption to school culture. School systems across America are working to bridge the gap between being a student-teacher and a teacher of students as beginning teachers are needing help modeling and improving the aspects involved in teaching in a real classroom of their own (Ganser, 2002; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Induction programs can vary in size and detail. Some districts include just those participants who are new to teaching altogether, whereas other districts also include teachers who transferring to the district (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The direct purpose can also have some variation as some districts provide the same assistance to all, whereas others customize the assistance given in order to prioritize those struggling most severely (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Research suggest that in order for an induction program to be effective, there must be clear goals, a commitment to the program, written guidelines, procedures and some form of mentoring or coaching (Portner, 2005).

In North Carolina in 2010, as part of the \$400 million federal Race to the Top grant, a New Teacher Support Program has been designed and implemented. North Carolina consistently saw the cost teacher attrition was having across the state, namely \$85 million per year (Retrieved from <https://ncntsp.northcarolina.edu/>). Faculty from the UNC System Colleges of Education collaborated to design and implement a comprehensive support program for beginning teachers (Bastain & Marks, 2017).

The program consisted of several components. The first component was face-to-face and virtual instructional coaching throughout the school year. The second component was on-going professional development throughout the school year. The third component was professional development institutes, lasting multiple days held mostly before the school year began. The

program did not aim to replace any professional development given by local districts, but to supplement beginning teachers in years one through three to increase their knowledge of the standards and assist in planning, classroom management, instructional strategies, data-driven decision making, and goal setting (Bastain & Marks, 2017).

Bastain and Marks research concluded that the induction program teachers in the regions with the most intensive program participation had the highest positive outcomes. This led them to conclude that the dosage may matter when it comes to new teacher induction support. To further their thinking in this area, they specifically studied teachers who had at least one instructional coaching visit per month. In this sample group, there were significantly higher teacher value-added estimates in mathematics grades 4-8 and in secondary end-of-course exams (Bastain & Marks, 2017).

Challenges for Beginning Teachers

Teaching is hard. One does not need a special degree or certain badge to tell you there is grueling work involved in educating young minds. Ask any teacher, they will tell you. Many teachers who are new to the job of teaching leave, citing a lack of support and lack of guidance from others in the field (Goldrick et al., 2012). Voss et al. (2017) and his associates write about two particular reasons why teaching is so difficult: teaching requires the regulation of highly complex situations and it also requires regulation of one's own emotions. Voss describes what he means by highly complex situations by detailing the efforts teachers have to go to in order to maintain a conducive learning environment, despite multiple and unpredictable events often taking place at one time, while one's own actions are being watched by everyone in the room. Later, he writes that while this seems to be a juggling act, "efficient classroom management is the main predictor of student learning" (Voss et al., 2017). Regardless of the path one has gone

down that led them to the classroom, beginning teachers enter with the same expectations and responsibilities expected of veteran teachers, yet they are still learning how to teach (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Le Maistre & Paré, 2010).

In years past, good teaching and learning was thought of as students sitting in rows, quiet and still, while the teacher lectured at the front of the class. The teacher was seen as the holder of the knowledge and students were to listen and write quickly, in order to accomplish the goal of knowledge transfer from teacher to student. Students doing what is asked of them and students behaving are two of the big components to classroom management, but one writer argues that classroom management is far more complex than these two basic dimensions. The writer continues, including that classroom management “involvement knowledge about, processing of, and representation of the full spectrum of classroom events,” all while “responding to and interacting effectively within this spectrum of events” (Wolff et al., 2014). Because so much of classroom management is linked to pedagogical knowledge and the host of complex skills essential for guiding learning, it is no surprise this is a major challenge for most beginning teachers.

Feiman-Nesmer (2003) stressed that it takes at least three years, often four, in the teaching profession for teachers to feel confident in their abilities. Feiman-Nesmer also stress that it is just at this point, year three or four, where teachers begin to be proficient in their work, only to increase in proficiency over the next few years. It is common to see beginning teachers become discouraged as they encounter one first-year struggle after another (Brock & Grady, 2007). Teachers have shared that the first year of teaching seems much like ‘climbing a mountain that is cloud-covered. You can’t see very far ahead, and you don’t know how high the mountain is’ (Ganser, 2002, p. 40).

Beginning teachers identify other negative stresses to teaching, ranging from the unrealistic expectations they place on themselves, to the massive amounts of paperwork required, to lesson planning where the bar is set so high, on top of all of the other daily tasks (Goodwin, 2012). So many new teachers feel as though they are not prepared to tackle all of these challenges, and certainly not all at once as they enter the classroom setting as the leader for the first time (Berry & Russell, 2016; Haykin & Network, 2004). These feelings of unreachable expectations and so much paperwork and lesson planning, further drowns beginning teachers as required orientations and professional development meetings take seemingly all their afternoon time (Brock & Grady, 2007).

Researchers at the National Education Association polled 1,500 teachers concerning standardized testing. Common feedback from teachers as reported in these polls mentioned the increased pressure to raise tests scores and the increasing amount of time spent preparing and administering standardized tests (Walker, 2014). If one were to question why teachers expressed these concerns, consider how from 2008 to 2018, standardized tests have been used to create value-added teacher reports. These models strive to determine a teacher's influence and contribution in promoting student achievement year after year (Konstantopoulos, 2014). The use of these reports vary from state to state, but many states look at this data to rank teachers, a few even using these models to reward or penalize teachers through salary increases or bonuses, promotions or terminations. Whether or not one finds these value-added reports credible or not, fails to deter some states from continuing their practice of using them as reflective instruments regarding teachers (Konstantopoulos, 2014).

The No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 required that all teachers be highly qualified by 2006. As ESSA was passed by Congress in 2015, giving much control back to the individual

states, the pressure to hire highly qualified teachers wasn't lifted much as most states continued to incorporate test scores and teacher accountability models as part of the evaluation tool (Klein, 2016). Like with any job, increasing demands and judgement on work performance can lead one to seek a new profession. This has certainly been a trend among public schools. Beginning teachers are becoming overwhelming frustrated by the demands and pressures and are leaving the profession before ever arriving at highly qualified teacher status (Wong, 2004). This shortage is directly affecting student achievement as teacher quality is the single greatest factor impacting student achievement (Wong, 2004).

Much research exists regarding student achievement and parental support or involvement. For beginning teachers working with parents, students and families can be difficult. Depending on several factors, ranging from culture, socio-economic status, educational background, religion, race, and more, parental involvement can look different family to family. Interestingly, there is a wide range of results from a multitude of studies describing effects parental involvement has on students' educational outcomes and achievements (McNeal, 2015). One thing, though, that researchers can agree upon is that parental emotional support is beneficial in predicting higher achievement outcomes and lower test anxiety (Song et al., 2015).

Beginning teachers often face the problem of imitation, meaning they merely imitate, or copy, the actions and teaching styles of their cooperating teachers. Beginning teachers claim that their cooperating teacher was the one they learned the most from, but inquiry should be made into how much did the beginning teacher learn and how much did they just imitate, without giving thought to any justification (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Griffin, 1983). Unfortunately, these actions by the cooperating teacher, combatted with memories from

childhood are often more influential instructors than the abstract teachings from university instructors (Valli, 1992).

Isolation is also a challenge for beginning teachers. Cochran-Smith (1991) states “there are powerful norms in most schools about collegiality” (p. 109). Job dissatisfaction and impediment of professional growth are two issues that beginning teachers can face as a result of the lack of positive interactions with their colleagues. Even though teachers are almost always around others, the others they are around are mostly small children, with minimal or strictly procedural adult interaction (Valli, 1992).

The feelings of isolation many beginning teachers experience are new professional experiences for most beginning teachers. During the internship period, not only does the beginning teacher interact regularly with one’s cooperating teacher, but also the university supervisor. In addition, most universities also still hold periodic classes for beginning teachers to continue to collaborate with their peers. Goodlad (1991) discusses these feelings of isolation as he mentions how beginning teachers typically find employment at schools where they know very few, if any teachers, and they know very little about the school.

Challenges for Beginning Teachers in Rural Schools

Specific to rural schools, beginning teachers can be affected by the lack of social and cultural activities the community provides, in comparison to those normally found in large urban and suburban districts. Also found in rural districts can be small schools where teachers must provide instruction in more than one subject area, sometimes to more than one grade level at a time. Other duties such as leading extracurricular activities, like clubs and sports, or driving a bus, can be expected (Collins, 1999). These activities increase the time commitment and strain for beginning teachers and can decrease their emotional well-being overtime.

Rural communities tend to be less private, and thus it is harder for beginning teachers to manage the social aspects within and outside of the school (Goodpaster et al., 2012). One key challenge for beginning teachers in rural areas is learning to “fit into” the community in order to be successful. This can be better understood through the lens of the multiplex relations concept of social capital theory. This theory refers to situations where people are linked in more than one area, typically found in rural communities (Goodpaster et al., 2012). In these multiplex relational situations, resources, information and obligations from one relationship can be used in other relationships, thus making it hard to separate a teaching career from a personal life. It is hard to separate these two as overlap in relationships commonly occurs (e.g., as a teacher, sports’ league coach, friend of the family). Thus, teachers who are not familiar with the norms in rural communities may not be prepared for working with these dynamics (Goodpaster et al., 2012).

Support for Beginning Teachers

Comprehensive teacher induction programs are one avenue for increasing teacher improvement. Many studies have found positive relationships between positive and productive induction programs and teacher retention (DeAngelis et al., 2013; Kelley, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Studies have also shown that induction programs also positively impact the quality of teaching and thus, student achievement (Stanulis & Floden, 2009).

Horn et al. (2002) listed nine elements induction programs should include:

- Orientation
- Mentoring
- Adjustment of working conditions
- Release time
- Professional development opportunities

- Teacher assessment
- Program evaluation
- Follow-up into the second year

It is important that induction programs help beginning teachers by providing models of good teaching and effective pedagogical practices. Beginning teachers also need guidance from mentors as they begin curriculum planning and implementation (Horn et al., 2002).

Mentoring, a relationship forged at the school level, is normally a component of most induction programs (Portner, 2008). This is usually a one-on-one mentor relationship whereas the mentor serves as a guide and supporter for the mentee. Mentors are selected based upon their demonstrated excellence in teaching, their dispositions toward collaboration and commitment to improvement and growth (Kelley, 2004). Mentors can, and often should, provide encouragement to the beginning teacher, helping them build confidence, find answers to questions, make wise decisions, and develop their capacities to learn, teach, and lead (Portner, 2008). In the best and more effective situations, mentors are released from their own classrooms to concentrate on the beginning teachers and their needs (Kelley, 2004). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that beginning teachers who had mentors in the same subject area as themselves who also participated in professional development activities with other beginning teachers had significantly lower first-year attrition rates.

Veteran teachers who are well-established in their practice, who have a love for the profession, and who relate well to others, should be considered for the mentor role. Koki (1997) describes the qualities of a good mentor to include interpersonal skills, working knowledge of teaching methods, ability to navigate the coaching process, effective communication skills, and understanding of the stages of teacher development. “Mentors use their expertise to help support

beginning teachers develop in ways that are responsible to the needs of the teacher” (Portner, 2005, p. 62).

Another school level support program for beginning teachers can be found in the administrative team at any school. Principals play a critical role in their support, interactions, guidance and encouragement of beginning teachers. VanderPyl’s (2007) research yielded evidence to conclude that the result of strong principals was a strong staff, therefore demonstrating the trickle-down leadership. Support among staff members develops as principal support of beginning teachers is made obvious (Quinn & Andrews, 2004). Brock and Grady (1998) did extensive research on the relationships between beginning teachers and principals. From their research, beginning teachers identified a need for principals to play a critical role in the induction process and to give assistance throughout the course of the school year.

Some beginning teachers have access to university-based induction programs. These partnerships between beginning teachers and university induction programs are typically borne out of the student teaching and field placement relationships. Universities, as such, have pre-established relationships with schools where they understand the context of the schools and can offer targeted supports. University based induction programs can provide direct researched-based strategies, supports and resources to beginning teachers much easier than districts can because of the specialized work and access to resources (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Also, university-related induction programs can be more beneficial in smaller or low-performing school districts where access to fiscal and human resources for high-quality induction may be limited at best (Bastian & Marks, 2017). There is also a gain for universities in this. Universities are able to benefit from the reciprocal relationships between universities and districts as the best practices from schools

can come back to the university to improve preservice teacher education and undergraduate induction (Zeichner, 2010).

The difficulty with many induction programs is the wide range of functional levels and the impact those induction programs have on improving the practices and knowledge of beginning teachers. Darling-Hammond and Sykes (1999) report that while half of new teachers participate in induction programs, many of them only offer assistance in superficial ways. For example, superficial assistance could include in some cases, district orientations, sporadic workshops unrelated to a common theme or the needs of the beginning teacher, and generic classroom management strategies (Gold, 1996). This is all in contrast to the many other professions who provide substantial transitional assistance for beginning level persons. In medicine, there is a residency program, in architecture there is an apprenticeship period, and there are associates in law. Yet, in education, many professionals have historically ignored the needs of beginning teachers and new hires despite the reports of high retention rates among new teachers when induction and mentoring programs are in place (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

Effective induction programs provide beginning teachers opportunities to collaborate with others, learn in professional learning communities, observe exemplar teachers and be observed by exemplar teachers. Following these observations, beginning teachers analyze their own practice with and without exemplar teachers guiding them and then they can also network and collaborate with other beginning teachers (Kelley, 2004). Reflective teaching practices prove valuable experiences for beginning teachers. Activities and techniques that encourage reflection serve to further teachers' thinking and when mentors ask open-ended questions to beginning teachers, they lead the beginning teachers to develop more independence in their thinking and

problem-solving abilities (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Professional development options are also important. This is because when professional development trainings are customized to specific teacher needs, there is a more direct impact on quality of instruction and management within classrooms (Kelley, 2004).

Like with most jobs, there can be a steep learning curve when beginning a new profession. Many new teachers benefit from assistance in setting up their classrooms, familiarizing themselves with curriculum documents, developing classroom procedures, rules and routines and developing strong relationships and communication with parents from the beginning (Kelley, 2004). Short-term and long-term planning assistance, training in developing standards-based lessons that are appropriate in their rigor, writing appropriate assessments, and navigating the work of differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all learners are services provided by excellent induction programs (Kelley, 2004).

Summary and Conclusions

Beginning teachers have had common struggles that include guiding rigorous learning, classroom management, imitation of preservice teachers and isolation for many years (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Valli, 1992; Voss et al., 2017). Given to us in the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, the federal mandate for schools to be staffed with “highly qualified” teachers by 2006 posed a difficulty for many schools and districts. The solution to ensure compliance, though, was “paradoxically shortsighted” at best as alternative certification and alternative licensure programs were promoted to grow the pool of teachers eligible for employment (Kelley, 2004, p. 446). Beginning teachers lack pedagogy therefore, the needs of beginning teachers coming from these alternative programs were often more significant than previous beginning teachers. Even though this change was well-known in education circles, the needs of the

increased number of novice teachers continued to be neglected by those who can make changes to provide better supports (Kelley, 2004). As such, well-designed and research-based induction programs are necessary to increase the retention of novice teachers as well as improve their chances for success in moving student learning toward 21st Century goals and standards. In the next chapter, the researcher will describe the study design used in this research.

CHAPTER 3: STUDY DESIGN

Colleges of education report that fewer and fewer people are enrolling in their programs. Between the 2007-2008 and 2015-2016 academic years, there was a 23% decline in the number of people completing teacher-preparation programs (Will, 2018). If the universities are not able to train the next round of teachers because they are not enrolling in educational programs of study, the next generation of teachers will be more underprepared than ever. Thus, the training and in-service preparation will be left to local school districts and the work of their beginning teacher induction programs. As a result, these beginning teacher induction programs will need to function effectively and efficiently, providing beginning teachers with the tools they need to meet the needs of students every day. Given the complexities of teaching and the rigorous instruction required in order to train students to become career and college ready, this is no easy task. School districts and state departments of education will be forced to devote increasing resources to building the capacity in teachers in the coming years as the work is no longer being shared with Colleges of education as commonly as before.

Recruiting and retaining high quality teachers is vital to the success of public education (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In a small, rural North Carolina school district, it is consistently difficult to accomplish this important task. As a result, many school leaders resort to hiring teachers who do not have their teaching license and who did not complete an educator or teacher preparation program at a university. Such beginning teachers may be drastically unprepared to enter the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The aim of this study was to help educators in a small, rural school district develop a common understanding and plan for supporting beginning teachers with the short-term goal of increasing teacher retention and a long-term goal of increasing student achievement.

This study examined and redesigned a beginning teacher induction program at a rural middle school. Collaborative action research guided the study design of this study. Sagor (1992) defines collaborative action research as “a process that enables teachers to improve the teaching-learning process while also contributing to the development of their own profession” (p. 6). The five steps of action research are: problem identification, plan of action, data collection, analysis of data and plan for future action. Action research is undertaken by researchers who want to know whether they can improve their own situation. It is different than other types of research where the researcher just publishes reports that they *hope* will one day be beneficial to someone. Action researchers, in contrast, look at what they themselves are or should be doing (Sagor, 1992).

The questions for the study were:

1. What elements of mentor support are most effective from the perception of beginning teachers in a rural middle school setting?
2. What elements make an effective beginning teacher induction program in a rural middle school setting from the perception of a mentor teacher?
3. How does the help mentors provide beginning teachers in the areas of focus, collaboration and reflection increase the sense of effectiveness of beginning teachers?
4. What are the various contributions mentors made that helped retain teachers?
5. What did the researcher learn about the leadership skills required to implement an induction program in a rural middle school?

The researcher’s goal in asking these questions was to determine what aspects of the current beginning teacher induction program were helpful and which were not. From there, the researcher identified and implemented some of the additional needs and supports that data

supported to be beneficial in including in the beginning teacher induction program. The researcher, who is the school's principal, also reflected on the leadership component needed to redesign and implement an induction program in a rural middle school.

The outcome intended to yield the discovery of successful methods for mentors and principals to support and guide beginning teachers so that job satisfaction and job productivity increased with beginning teachers, thus increasing the likelihood of retention.

Study Design and Rationale

The researcher conducted Collaborative Action Research centered around beginning teachers and their supports in a rural middle school setting. Sagor (1992) defines collaborative action research as “a process that enables teachers to improve the teaching-learning process while also contributing to the development of their own profession” (p. 6). Action research is undertaken by researchers who want to know whether they can improve their own situation. It is different than other types of research where the researcher just publishes reports that they *hope* will one day be beneficial to someone. Action researchers, in contrast, look at what they themselves are or should be doing (Sagor, 1992).

Sagor (1992) describes the three stages of action in action research as initiating action, monitoring and adjusting action and then evaluating action. For each of these three stages, the researcher completed a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle. The researcher used Collaborative Action Research as the method of building layers into the study to allow for greater depth and also offered the researcher the opportunity to make small, impactful changes along the way. The goal of each action research cycle was to refine and improve along each cycle, something that is not an option in a single case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Langley et al. (2009)

described the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle as a model for improvement. They highlight three guiding questions that are the framework for improvement idea in the model. They are:

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- How will we know that a change is an improvement?
- What changes can we make that will result in improvement?

This model has been proven effective as it allows for ideas to be tested and changes to be implemented and monitored (Langley et al., 2009).

Study Context

For the local context of this study, the school system and school examined is a small, rural county in NC with a population of 56,000 during the 2010 census. There is a strong agricultural base in the county, but also increasing advanced manufacturing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). According to the census data, 10% of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher and the average income in 2016 was \$32,298. Also, in 2016, 24% of the county's residents were identified as living in poverty. The race breakdown is as follows: 57.4% Black, 38.8% White, 3.7% Hispanic/Latino and 0.1% other (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

According to NC Child's 2016 research, 70.9% of children in this county are living in poor or low-income homes and 67.8% per 1,000 children are assessed for abuse or neglect. The county has a 32.4% proficiency rate for 3rd grade students in reading and 80.7% of high school students in the county graduate on time (NC Child, 2016).

The local district studied has consistently hovered around 5,900 enrolled students over the past three years (see Table 1). In 2014-2015, there were 5,854 students. In 2015-2016, there were 5,953 students. In 2016-2017, there were 5,944 students. Also, consistently over the past three years, there have been 14 schools making up the district (NC School Report Cards, 2018).

The specific school included in the study has approximately 24 teachers. Eleven of the 24 teachers are African-American, and the other thirteen are Caucasian. Of these 24 teachers, 11 do not have their full teaching license. This means that roughly 46% of the teachers in this school are either completing lateral entry course work, in the beginning teacher program or serving as substitute teachers because of lack of certifications. This study will focus on the four mentors at the school, with years of experience being 26, 12, 10 and four. The beginning teachers included in this study include five in year one, two in year two and two in year three. This is a total of four mentors and 9 beginning teachers.

Collaborative Action Research Team

Sagor's (1992) description of collaborative action research includes "a team of practitioners who have a common interest and work together to investigate issues and implement actions to address issues". The collaborative action research team (CART) for this study was comprised of four people. First, was the researcher and principal of the rural middle school. Second, third and fourth were the school's three beginning teacher mentors. The demographics of these CART members is listed in Table 3, including years of experience, role, gender, years at the current rural middle school and the subject area(s) of their licensure (see Table 3).

Sample and Sampling Procedures

The sample for this study was all of the beginning teachers in one rural, middle school. All beginning teachers at the school who were willing to participate were involved as to have a large enough sample size. Only one school was used to ensure the sample size was manageable and not too large.

Table 3

Mentor Teacher Demographics

Title	Years of Experience	Gender	Years at Current School	Subject Area
Principal	9	F	1 at Principal; 2 as Assistant Principal	Administration; Mathematics
Teacher A	27	F	< 1 year	Administration; Special Education
Teacher B	10	F	4 years	Elementary Education; Digital Literacy
Teacher C	17	F	6 years	Business

Table 4 has the demographic information for the 9 beginning teachers that participated in this study. Their ages, whether or not they already had an education degree, beginning teacher classification, grade and subject area are included. You will see that only three of the beginning teachers currently held an education degree at the time that the study was completed. You will also see that the majority of these beginning teachers were teaching tested subject areas, which include Math and English-Language Arts (ELA) (see Table 4).

Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher had to go through several approval stages in order to gain access to participants and data. The following outline was taken from Creswell and Poth (2018). First, the researcher had to complete Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Certification. This consisted of 13 modules to be completed and submitted. The next step was for the researcher to gain approval from East Carolina University (ECU) through the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once the researcher had IRB approval, the researcher then had to submit documentation to the school district where the research would be conducted in order to gain local approval. This documentation included a copy of the IRB approval (see Appendix A).

At the beginning of the study, the researcher contacted the participants to inform them of the general purposes of the study and to share that participation was voluntary. At all times the researcher respected the differences among the participants, practicing kindness and integrity. The participants all provided written consent on the informed consent form taken from Mertler (2009).

During the study, the researcher was respectful of the site where the collection of data was occurring. The researcher was mindful of the daily disruptions data collection would require as well as being respectful of the participants time. The researcher was always clear regarding

Table 4

Beginning Teacher Demographics

Title	Age	Education Degree (Y/N)	Classification (BT 1-3)	Grade	Subject Area
Beginning Teacher A	24	N	BT 1	6 th - 8 th	Special Education
Beginning Teacher B	45	Y	BT 1	8 th	Social Studies
Beginning Teacher C	45	N	BT 1	8 th	Math
Beginning Teacher D	32	N	BT 3	6 th	Math
Beginning Teacher E	25	Y	BT 2	6 th	Science
Beginning Teacher F	29	N	BT 1	8 th	Math/ELA
Beginning Teacher G	31	Y	BT 3	7 th	ELA
Beginning Teacher H	28	N	BT 2	8 th	ELA
Beginning Teacher I	25	N	BT 1	6 th - 8 th	CTE

the purpose of the study and the usages for the data. The researcher also reminded participants of confidentiality and rewarded participants for their willingness to share. The researcher also shared with participants the benefits they, as the local school, and the profession in general would receive based on the conclusions of the research. The researcher also vowed to store data and materials appropriately, using proper security measures for five years. The storage of the materials will be kept electronically on password-protected external hard drives.

The researcher was a key part of the collaborative action research team, serving as the principal of the rural middle school. This action research documented and detailed the various stages of work within the study. The principal's contributions allowed for irreplaceable knowledge to be gained from the study that will inform and guide future work both personally and professionally.

While analyzing the data, the researcher reported all perspectives, including any contrary findings. At all times in the research, the researcher maintained the confidentiality of all participants by using aliases and fictitious names, as well as pseudonyms for school and district names. The researcher was consistently the only person with access to the actual participant names. The data reports were all reported honestly, ensuring individuals could not be identified and with appropriate language.

When the study was completed, the researcher gave copies to all participants and stakeholders. Practical results were shared with various audiences and in various print and electronic forms. There were no funders for this research besides the researcher him/herself and thus there was no profit made from the study.

Procedures, Instrumentation, Data Processing and Analysis

This study was composed of three Collaborative Action Cycles utilizing Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles as the process for each. The three cycles are highlighted in the figure and then described in greater detail (see Figure 2).

Collaborative Action Cycle 1 – Early Fall 2019

PLAN: The Collaborative Action Research Team (CART) met to discuss these items and decided on the purpose and data needed. The CART decided that teacher retention and beginning teachers' feelings of confidence and self-efficacy were important so there was a need to redesign the beginning teacher induction program at the school level to better meet the needs of beginning teachers. The CART decided that the team needed feedback from beginning teachers that participated in the induction program the previous year. The team decided it was important to know what teachers thought about the various induction components and topics. The topics the CART thought were important to know about include: classification status as a beginning teacher, formal teacher preparation training program information, why the person sought employment at the specific rural middle school, previous year's mentor information, overall rating of the induction program, overall rating of the feelings of support, preparedness and confidence, access to tools needed, recommendation to others, feelings of support from the administration team and support ratings for specific areas of teacher development. Each of these topic areas related to one of the aspects of the theoretical framework, including focus, collaboration and reflection. Overlaying the three elements of the framework within the survey questions allowed the CART to analyze which of the three framework elements was most critical to address and improve (see Table 5).

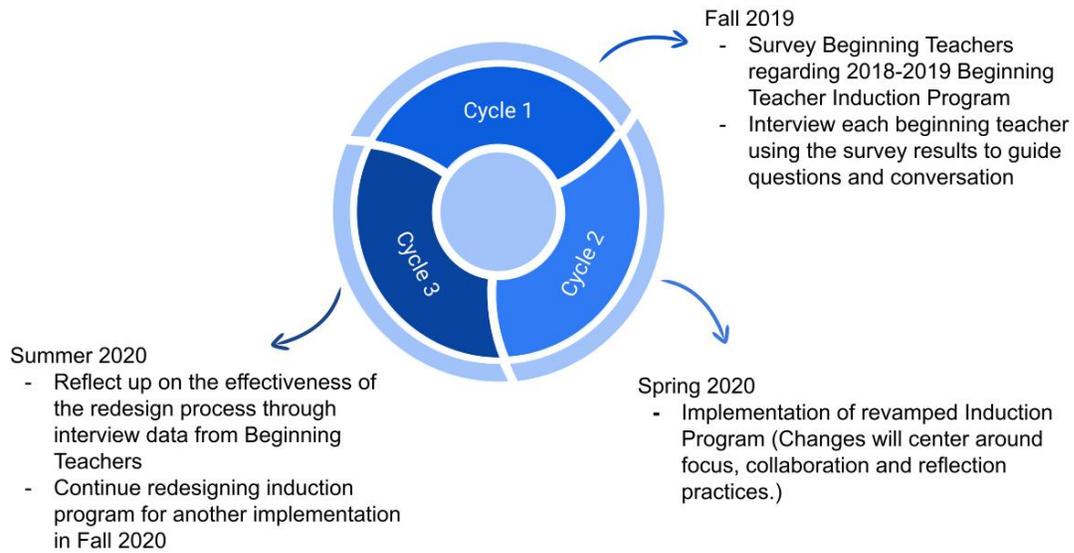


Figure 2. Collaborative action cycles.

Table 5

Study Questions and Conceptual Framework Mapping

Study Question	Focus Theme	Reflection Theme	Collaboration Theme
1. What elements of mentor support are most effective from the perception of beginning teachers in a rural middle school setting?			X
2. What elements make an effective beginning teacher induction program in a rural middle school setting from the perception of a mentor teacher?		X	
3. How does the help mentors provide beginning teachers in the areas of focus, collaboration and reflection increase the sense of effectiveness of beginning teachers?	X	X	X
4. What are the various contributions mentors made that helped retain teachers?			X
5. What did the researcher learn about the leadership skills required to implement an induction program in a rural middle school?	X	X	X

Next, the CART decided that initial data should be collected through a survey and then questions were designed for teachers to answer as part of their beginning of school year activities (see Appendix C). The survey was developed using Qualtrics through East Carolina University to collect the feedback anonymously. The survey was designed by the researcher and then sent to the master teachers at the school. The middle school director also reviewed the survey questions for editing and revision purposes. Feedback was collected to ensure the questions addressed the intended goal defined by the elements the CART set forth.

Interviews are qualitative data and surveys are quantitative data, thus there was a need for mixed methods. Interviews were chosen because this form of research tends to focus on the “quality of a particular activity rather than on how often it occurs or how it might be evaluated” (Mertler, 2019, p. 77). Semistructured individual interviews were used as the researcher had the interview guide which contains a set of predetermined interview questions that can be seen as the base questions (see Appendix D). The CART also felt that individual interviews would allow for the most honest responses by the participants and would also ensure everyone’s voice will be heard. But also, this semi-structured interview style allowed for additional questions to be asked as a way to follow up with previous responses. The CART kept in mind the idea that the interview questions should be brief, clear and worded in as simple language as possible (Mertler, 2019).

After the interview questions were written and validated by others, a quiet, appropriate place for the interviews to be conducted was decided upon. Prior to the interviews, the CART sought permission from the interviewees to conduct and audiotape the conversations. The interviewer only recorded brief notes during the interview as to listen more and talk less. The interview guide was followed but following the semistructured format, additional probing, but not

leading questions were asked in order to gather as much information as possible (Mertler, 2019). When the interviews were over, the participants were kindly thanked for their participation in a professional manner.

One of the goals for this study was to be able to draw conclusions from the data that yielded recommended solutions and best practices for comparable schools regarding beginning teacher support and beginning teacher program design. The outcomes yielded improved practices that can be used in the future across similar schools, districts and states. Surveys were also chosen because this type of research allowed for some numerical data to be calculated and then generalized into results. These surveys were more structured than qualitative research (Mertler, 2019).

DO: A meeting was held with all beginning teachers and mentors in September 2019 as part of the school activities to introduce the work to redesign the induction model. The consent forms were distributed to the teachers after IRB approval was obtained in order to utilize the data collected by the mentors and the teacher as part of this study. This study was exempt because this work was part of the researcher's current role. The researcher simply needed to ask for permission from the teachers and mentors to use their data and feedback.

An overview of the study and consent form was given to all beginning teachers once IRB approval had been gained. Those willing to participate were given a consent form to sign and then the survey link. The goal of this survey for beginning teachers (see Appendix C) was to collect feedback regarding what each beginning teacher's experience in the induction program was like during the 2018-2019 school year and to also collect feedback that would later guide the redesign process.

STUDY: Once the surveys were completed, the data was analyzed and coded using a three-step process involving organization, description and interpretation (Mertler, 2019). The researcher coded the response data to highlight common themes, as well as outlier responses from the beginning teachers. The coding was done by using scissors to cut apart the pages of transcripts and interview notes. Then, the partial pages were physically grouped, using sticky notes to help with the easy reorganization and recategorization (Mertler, 2019).

Next, the CART looked through the coded and analyzed data results. The questions that still were unanswered, as well as the areas where more information was needed were thought through and additional follow-up questions were written. Plans were made for the next round of meetings, which were individual interviews with beginning teachers, which were audio recorded, so that they could be asked follow-up questions (see Appendix E).

The researcher transcribed all of the interviews. Then, the transcription records were then printed as hard copies multiple times. The researcher analyzed the data following guidance from Saldana's work (Saldaña, 2014). The researcher first read through the transcripts to look for major themes aligned with the themes of the conceptual framework: focus, collaboration and reflection. Then, the researcher read the transcripts again, highlighting specific details and quotes that pertained to each of the areas of focus, collaboration and reflection. The researcher used different colored pens and highlighters to code these themes. Upon other reading of the data, the researcher looked for similarities and differences among the groups and themes to ensure nothing was overlooked.

The researcher had to reread the data to code it properly. The coding nodes are not always obvious upon a first, or even second read. The researcher reread data multiple times to ensure all proper nodes were selected in the coding process. After the researcher felt that the

coding had been completed appropriately and successfully, the researcher then described the themes and main characteristics that resulted from the coding. Connections were made between the data and the research questions originally defined. It is important for the researcher to ensure that the connections between the themes which emerged and the connections to the research questions were properly expounded upon. Then, the question was asked: “How does the information in this particular category help me understand my research topic and answer my research question?” (Mertler, 2019).

The researcher must not only look for the common themes and answers to the research questions, but also for data that conflicts with the common themes and patterns which may emerge. These insights are crucial to the reflection upon the research questions as well. This leads to the reflection that comes from interpreting the data once it has been organized and simplified. The researcher should identify aspects in the data that answer the research questions, or have implications on future related work (Mertler, 2019).

ACT: Based off of the results from the analyzed responses, suggestions for improving the induction program, its “revamping”, will be written. The goal is for the interviews to give more insight into what changes need to occur in the current induction program. The outcome for this cycle is to redesign the induction program that will take effect in Spring 2020. In order for this to take place, the CART will meet twice a month to analyze data, draw conclusions and plan next steps for redesign implementation.

Collaborative Action Cycle 2 – Spring 2020

The outcome for this cycle is to implement a redesigned induction process aligned with the theoretic framework, focusing on elements of focus, collaboration and reflection. The redesign is based off of the feedback from beginning teachers that the CART gathered through

surveys and interviews. The redesign will be implemented Spring 2020 and the CART will collect data to determine how well the redesign worked. The implementation will help inform the changes needed for the induction program for beginning teachers for the following year.

PLAN: Based off of the feedback and results from Cycle 1, the changes to the current induction program were planned out. The CART team met to discuss the data after it had that be analyzed. The team also created a timeline for implementation. The team decided that the changes would be centered around focus, collaboration and reflection practices.

DO: The changes to the induction program went into effect, after being planned and carefully designed. Resources and materials needed to make the changes and implementation efforts were provided. Monitoring checks were scheduled on a monthly basis and deadlines for due dates were also set to gather data along the way.

STUDY: At this time the CART looked back through all of the research, work and findings that had been gathered thus far in the collaborative action research process. The team met to discuss the induction process through the lens of the framework and studied the data to determine if the goals had been accomplished.

ACT: The interview and survey questions were reviewed and revised based on the findings in the study section. The CART wanted to ensure that the team had the data regarding implementation efforts that would be needed in Cycle 3.

Collaborative Action Cycle 3 – Summer 2020

The outcome of this cycle was to reflect upon the effectiveness of the redesign process as well as to continue making plans for continued redesign of the school's beginning teacher induction program.

PLAN: Questions for the interviews in June 2020 were planned (see Appendix E).

DO: Interviews were scheduled and then conducted, as lead by the CART.

STUDY: Once all of the interviews were completed, the data was analyzed and coded.

The researcher coded the response data to highlight common themes, as well as outlier responses from the teachers and mentors. The data was studied. There was a specific focus on the CART's ability to work together to brainstorm improvements as a collaborative unit in action. A focus was placed on how the CART members, including the principal of the school, grew as professionals through the cycle process.

ACT: As a result of the data from the interviews with beginning teachers after the revisions to the induction program were made, recommendations of next steps and future revisions will be compiled for the year to come. These next steps will be compiled after the CART meets to look at the data summaries. Areas of growth and improvement will be highlighted, but also areas of concern that still exists or those that may have surfaced in the redesign process. The CART will prioritize these concerns in order to target the most pressing first in the next round of redesign. Also, suggestions for improvements to these three cycles will be listed, should someone else implement this process in the future. Recommendations for next steps will be made and put into place.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher in this study is a female school level leader. The researcher started her career in education as a high school math teacher. Later, she transitioned to a middle school assistant principal and now a middle principal. The researcher was a North Carolina Teaching Fellow and has a deep, invested interest in improving education in North Carolina. Through her work as a school level administrator, the researcher sees the direct impact high quality teachers have on students and moving learning forward. Also, the researcher has seen the impact

unprepared and untrained teachers have on students and the implications that has for years to come. The researcher conducted the research with respect to all subjects involved and, in a manner, where potential bias was minimized. The researcher also maintained fairness and respect for all participants.

Considering that the researcher is the direct leader, namely the principal, at the school where the research is being conducted, that is important to identify. As the principal of a school, there is an understood evaluative nature to most interactions between the principal and others. While the principal does not always consider all interactions to have an evaluative component, often times beginning teachers most certainly do, as well as mentor teachers too. As the researcher in this study and also the principal of the school, the researcher will have to be very intentional regarding stressing the importance of the research work remaining confidential and separate from the duties of a principalship.

Collaborative leadership yields to higher achievement, greater productivity, and more caring, supportive and committed relationships (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012). Therefore, collaborative action research, research done with people for a common goal, yields positive results through the collaboration. In this study, the collaboration through the CART team will help to develop each member as a better leader and educator. Individuals have their knowledge base expanded as they exchange information, experiences and learning with one another. Working together towards a common goal produces greater results than one working alone (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012). Henceforth, the Collaborative Action Research Team (CART) will be instrumental in developing and strengthening the beginning teacher induction program.

Summary

Collaborative Action Research is closely connected to personal, professional and social change. Since research involving beginning teachers and mentors is by nature research done with people in a social context, it makes sense that collaborative action research will be used (Riel, 2019). Sagor (1992) says collaborative action research is for people who want to work with others to improve common issues. Improving the beginning teacher induction program at a specific rural middle school is the goal of this study, aligning directly with collaborative action research. Through the utilization of three cycles of research, beginning teachers and mentors will aid in the study and data collection, and then be analyzed by the researcher to yield information which will direct improvements for the current induction program. The results will be used to further improvements for district wide beginning teacher induction programs in the area and hopefully beyond.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The researcher's goal was to help educators in a small, rural school district develop a common understanding and plan for supporting beginning teachers with the short-term goal of increasing teacher retention and a long-term goal of increasing student achievement. This study intended to provide insight for the researcher, members of the CART at the middle school used in this study, and also other educational leaders who may read the study, on areas related to beginning teacher induction in rural school districts. Also, the knowledge gained through this study was used to improve the current beginning teacher induction program at this rural middle school.

While completing this study, the researcher faced an obstacle to overcome that few had been required to work through before. On Sunday, March 15, 2020, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper issued an order closing all public K-12 schools in North Carolina for in-person learning until May 15, 2020 as a result of COVID-19 pandemic (WUNC-TV, 2020). Across the United States, more than 50 million students were forced into remote learning around this time (Hobbs, 2020). As May 15, 2020 approached Governor Cooper extended the school closure through the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year (Hui et al., 2020).

These were very difficult times for teachers, principals and educators at all levels. Teachers had to rapidly move from a face-to-face teaching format to a 100% virtual platform for teaching through various video conferencing options such as Zoom and Google Meet. Principals and district leaders worked tirelessly to issue devices and internet hotspots as available to students. Many districts had large numbers of students without internet access (Mims & Franklin, 2020). For example, WRAL did a feature on Edgecombe County Public Schools, a rural district in eastern North Carolina. At the time of this particular news interview, August

2020, 1,000 out of 6,000 students in Edgecombe County had little to no internet. Remote learning had already been taking place for over four months at this time. While parents struggled watching students not have the means to connect with their teachers, teachers were struggling to adjust as well.

Prior to COVID-19, limited time and training had been spent helping teachers develop skills for virtual teaching. Also, virtual teaching was not a focus in professional development sessions for beginning teachers or for university students enrolled in teacher preparation programs. School and district leaders had to move quickly to create and schedule professional development training session and resources for teachers to learn how to effectively deliver lessons through virtual video streaming platforms. This was difficult for everyone involved. Specifically for principals, many added more to their already full load, serving as essential workers, handing out food to families through bus meal delivery and pickup, bringing laptops and tablets to students, keeping up with student and staff morale through email and digital communication avenues, and parading through neighborhoods making visits to check on the well-being of students even from a safe, 6 foot distance away (Stone-Johnson & Miles Weiner, 2020).

As you can imagine, school closure was impactful for all parties involved, and certainly impacted the research conducted as a part of this study. The interviews that were conducted as part of Cycle I were conducted face to face as planned. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the second round of interviews that were a part of Cycle 3 were conducted virtually via the Google Meet video conferencing platform. This did not have a huge impact on the data collection, as the interviews were still able to be held, the only difference was that instead of looking at the

interviewee across the table, we saw each other through a screen. The interviews were still able to be recorded and transcribed.

The biggest impact COVID-19 had on the data collection was during Cycle 3 as COVID-19 strongly impacted answers that the participants shared. Many of the interviewees gave responses to questions that related to COVID-19 and its implications. Prior to COVID-19, other items would have been more dominant to teachers but in a school closure environment, this took precedence in teachers' minds and dominated and changed their work.

Nevertheless, the research was able to continue and the questions for the study remained unchanged.

The questions for this study were:

1. What elements of mentor support are most effective from the perception of beginning teachers in a rural middle school setting?
2. What elements make an effective beginning teacher induction program in a rural middle school setting from the perception of a mentor teacher?
3. How does the help mentors provide beginning teachers in the areas of focus, collaboration and reflection increase the sense of effectiveness of beginning teachers?
4. What are the various contributions mentors made that helped retain teachers?
5. What did the researcher learn about the leadership skills required to implement an induction program in a rural middle school?

Using these study questions, the researcher conducted Collaborative Action Research centered around beginning teachers and their supports in this rural middle school setting. Sagor (1992) defines collaborative action research as “a process that enables teachers to improve the teaching-learning process while also contributing to the development of their own profession” (p.

6). Action research is undertaken by researchers who want to know whether they can improve their own situation. It is different than other types of research where the researcher just publishes reports that they *hope* will one day be beneficial to someone. Action researchers, in contrast, look at what they themselves are or should be doing (Sagor, 1992).

Sagor (1992) describes the three stages of action in action research as initiating action, monitoring and adjusting action and then evaluating action. For each of these three stages, the researcher completed a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle. The researcher used Collaborative Action Research as the method of building layers into the study to allow for greater depth and also offered the researcher the opportunity to make small, impactful changes along the way. The goal of each action research cycle was to refine and improve along each cycle, something that is not an option in a single case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Langley et al. (2009) describe the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle as a model for improvement. They highlight three guiding questions that are the framework for improvement idea in the model. They are:

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- How will we know that a change is an improvement?
- What changes can we make that will result in improvement?

This model has been proven effective as it allows for ideas to be tested and changes to be implemented and monitored (Langley et al., 2009).

The Collaborative Action Research methodology, guided by the study questions, allowed the researcher to determine what aspects of the current beginning teacher induction program were helpful and which were not. The researcher utilized the data gathered to redesign the school beginning teacher induction program to address the unique needs of teachers in rural settings.

From there, the researcher identified additional needs and supports that would be beneficial to include in future revisions to the beginning teacher induction program.

Participants

In Table 1, lists district enrollment from 2014 through 2020. Student enrollment increased slightly from the 2014-2015 school year to the 2015-2016 school year and then stayed roughly the same for the following year (2016-2017). Beginning in 2017-2018 there was a significant decrease in enrollment that has continued up until the time of this research study, 2020.

In Table 2, lists the district beginning teacher turnover for the years 2016, 2017, 2018. The percentage of teachers not returning the next year increased from 2016 to 2017, but then decreased from 2017 to 2018. While this decrease is great news, the almost 32% teacher turnover rate being the lowest is still very concerning considering this means one of every three teachers do not return the following year.

In Table 3, shows demographic information for the mentor teachers and CART team members for the entirety of the study. The table details each person's years of experience, their gender, the number of years they have been employed at the current school being studied and their subject area of their license. The CART team has extensive years of experience in education as all of the members have at least 10 years of educational experience. Three of the four CART members also have multiple areas in which he/she is licensed. The CART members also have an average of four years of experience at the current school.

In Table 4, describes demographic information for the beginning teachers. The table details each person's age, whether or not they have an education degree, their beginning teacher classification, the grade level they are currently teaching and the subject area of their license.

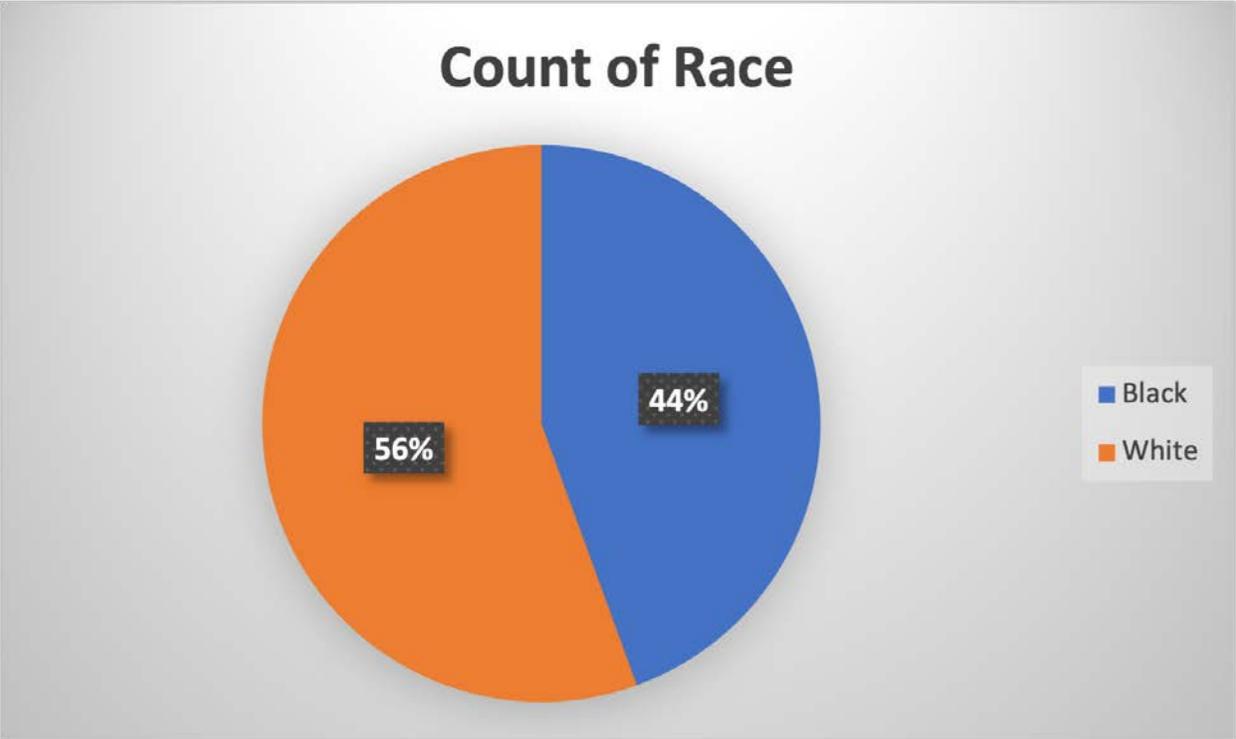


Figure 3. Count of race.

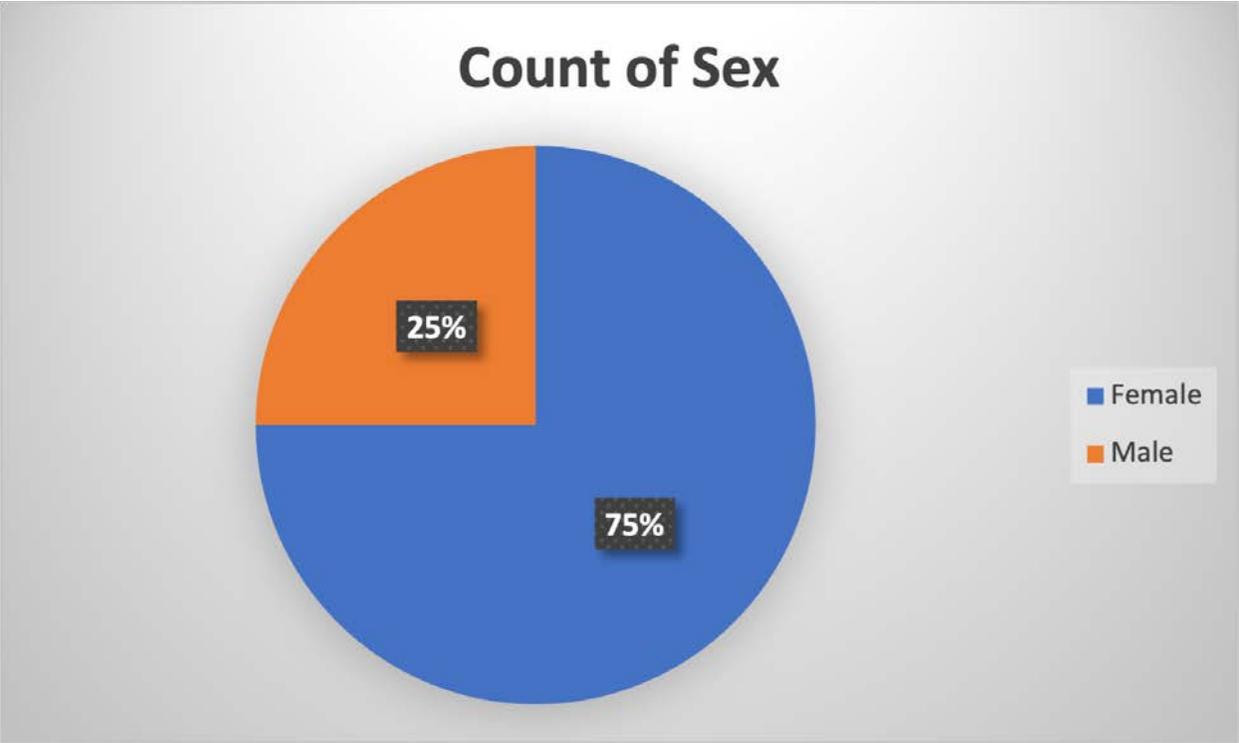


Figure 4. Count of sex.

Only three of the beginning teachers have education degrees while the other eight beginning teachers are lateral entry teachers. Five of the beginning teachers are year 1 beginning teachers. Four of the beginning teachers are year 2 beginning teachers. Two of the beginning teachers are year 3 beginning teachers. It is important to note that the number of beginning teachers decreases as the years of experience increases. It is also important to note that there are five beginning teachers teaching End-of-Grade tested subjects (ELA and Math). This means that 53.3%, or eight out of 15, of core teachers are beginning teachers.

Table 5 indicates the demographic information for all of the beginning teacher participants in this study. All of the participants included in this study were involved in all of the phases. The table gives an overview of participants disaggregated by percentages in several categories. The categories include race, gender and beginning teacher year classification. Roughly half of the beginning teachers are black, and half are white. There is a majority female in the beginning teacher participant list with 75% of beginning teachers being female. There is also a significant number of year 1 beginning teachers, exactly five out of the nine, or 55.6%. There were only two beginning teacher – year 2 participants and also two beginning teacher – year 3 participants. Thus, there was a sharp decrease after year 1 beginning teachers and the majority of the teachers who participated in the study were year 1 beginning teachers.

Data Analysis

The participants in this study included nine beginning teachers and four CART members. The nine beginning teachers and the four CART members remained consistent throughout the entire study and all participated in all cycles of the study. Roughly half of the beginning teachers are black, and half are white. There is a majority female in the beginning teacher participant list with 75% of beginning teachers being female. There is also a significant number of year 1

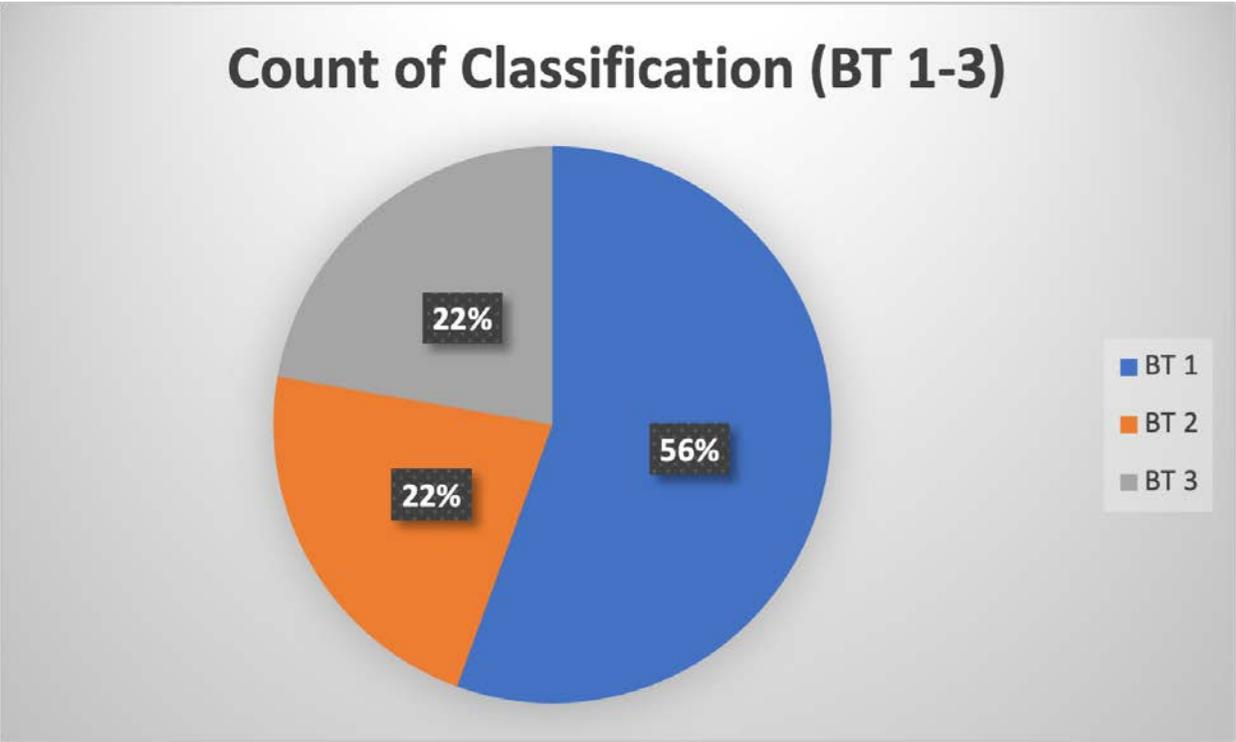


Figure 5. Count of classification (BT 1-3).

beginning teachers, exactly 5 out of the 9, or 55.6%. There were only two beginning teacher – year 2 participants and also two beginning teacher – year 3 participants. The CART for this study was comprised of four people. First, was the researcher and principal of the rural middle school. Second, third and fourth were the school’s three beginning teacher mentors. The CART members have an average of 10 years of experience in education and they are all four females.

Throughout this study, data was collected at different points during the collaborative action research cycles. During the Cycle 1, beginning teachers and mentor teachers were all given a survey to complete. This survey data served as a baseline to gather information from participants and also allowed the researcher to gather some data regarding the previous school year when the researcher was not on staff at the school used in the study. The survey was designed by the CART and then data was studied and analyzed as part of Cycle 1. As another part of Cycle 1, all beginning teachers were interviewed one-on-one. They were asked the interview questions for Cycle 1 as listed in Appendix D that were created using input from the CART. The data from the Cycle 1 interviews was analyzed by the CART as part of Cycle 2. After this interview data was analyzed by the CART, the CART used the data to design and make a change to the current school’s beginning teacher induction program. The change the CART decided on included making edits to the monthly beginning teacher log so that there would be an increased focus on collaboration and reflection, key elements of the study’s conceptual framework. The revised monthly log was used for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, which was the entire second semester. As part of Cycle 3, the beginning teachers were interviewed again following the interview protocol in Appendix E created with input from the CART. There was a specific question in the interview protocol related to the revised beginning teacher log, as well as questions specifically asking beginning teachers about the

themes of focus, collaboration and reflection. The interview data was coded by the researcher and discussed and dissected by the CART. The analysis from the interviews in Cycle 3 allowed the CART to discuss future implications as a result of the study findings. The CART also discussed and planned for 2020-2021 school year as a result of these findings. The CART developed a strong plan for the following year to allow for continued iterations of improvements to the school's beginning teacher induction program.

Collaboration Action Research Cycle 1 Data Analysis

As part of collaborative action research Cycle 1, all beginning teachers and beginning teacher mentors were surveyed to gather data regarding the 2018-2019 school year as well as their teaching background and experience. The 2018-2019 school year was the year prior to the start of the study. This data was used as a starting point or reference point for the remainder of the data collection. Of the beginning teacher participants involved in the study, 4 out of 9 worked at the school used in this study in the prior 2018-2019 school year. Additionally, 5 out of 9 beginning teachers worked in the district used in this study in the prior school year. Five of the 9 beginning teachers did not work with the study district during the prior year. Three of the beginning teachers indicated that they had been through formal teacher preparation training while 6 of the students had not received any formal teacher preparation training. All 3 of the beginning teachers who indicated that they had been through formal teacher preparation training indicated that subject matter content training, pedagogical training, early field experience and student teaching were all elements to their teacher preparation program.

When beginning teachers were asked about their reasoning for teaching in their current school, the most common answer was that he/she had friends or former colleagues working at the school. Six of the nine participants indicated this. Also at the top of the list for common

influences on the decision to work at the study school included the school being close to their home and close to friends and family. The list of influences on the decision to work at the current school is provided in Table 6.

Of the 9 beginning teachers in this survey, 7 were in a school setting during the 2018-2019 school year. Six of the 7 beginning teachers indicated that they had a mentor during that school year. This means that there was 1 beginning teachers in this study who taught during the 2018-2019 school year but did not have a mentor teacher. Of these 7 beginning teachers who taught during the previous school year, only three of them had a mentor who taught the same subject or grade as he/she did.

In ranking the overall quality of support from the 2018-2019 beginning teacher induction program, 6 of the 7 beginning teachers ranked the program average or above. Two of the 7 beginning teachers ranked the program as excellent while 3 of the 7 ranked the program as good. When asked specifically about the extent to which the beginning teacher induction program helped beginning teachers feel more confident as a teacher, no beginning teachers said, “a great deal,” one said “a lot,” four said “a moderate amount,” one said “a little,” and one said “none at all.”

When beginning teachers were asked the adequacy of the beginning teacher program providing them with the needed tools for teacher success, 4 of 7 participants said that they felt somewhat adequate tools were provided for success. One participant responded neutrally and 2 responded with somewhat inadequate. Of these 7 beginning teachers, only 3 of them said that they would definitely recommend the beginning teacher induction program to others. Another 2 said that they might or might not recommend the program to others while 2 others said that they probably or definitely would not recommend the program to others.

Table 6

Influences on Decision to Work at Current School

Influences	N	% (out of 9)
Attractive pay and benefits	2	22.2%
Appeal of teaching assignment	3	33.3%
School/division had good working conditions	2	22.2%
Friends/former colleagues at this school	6	66.7%
Challenge of working in a hard-to-staff school	0	0%
Short commuting distance	4	44.4%
Social and cultural offerings of the community or a nearby city	1	11.1%
Opportunities for advancement	2	22.2%
Appeal of physical and natural surroundings	0	0%
Close to friends and family	5	55.6%
Close to home	5	55.6%
Too few job choices	0	0%
Other	1	11.1%

Beginning teachers were asked about the quality of support they received from the administration team during the 2018-2019 school year. Almost half (3 of 7) of the beginning teachers said that they had excellent support. Three of the 7 beginning teachers said that they had good support and one beginning teacher said that he/she had average support from administration.

When beginning teachers were asked about their feelings of preparedness as they tackled challenges of teaching, there were not any beginning teachers who said they felt less than neutrally prepared. There were though, 3 of the 7 beginning teachers who did indicate that they were neutral on this question. 3 of 7 beginning teachers indicated that they felt moderately prepared and one beginning teacher indicated that he/she felt very prepared to face challenges.

Beginning teachers were asked to rate the amount of time and emphasis given to each element part of the 2018-2019 beginning teacher induction program. Almost an average of half of the participants felt that there was just the right amount of time spent on most of the subject areas (3 of 7 participants). One area that was sharply different from others though, was in the area of lesson plan writing. Five of the 7 participants indicated that there was not enough time spent on lesson plan writing. Also worth noting is that 4 of the 7 responses shared that there was not enough time spent on assessment creation or data tracking. All of this data is in Table 7.

The last survey question asked beginning teachers about the helpfulness of various school staff members. Over half (4 of 7) beginning teachers were extremely satisfied with all school personnel during the previous school year. The most common personnel members that beginning teachers were extremely or somewhat dissatisfied with her their mentor (2 of 7), their grade chair (1 of 7), the school instructional coach (2 of 7) and the assistant principal (1 of 7).

Table 7

Amount of Time and Emphasis given to Elements of the Beginning Teacher Induction Program

Elements	Far too much	Moderately too much	Slightly too much	Neither too much nor too little	Slightly too little	Moderately too little	Far too little
Subject matter content	0	0	0	3	1	1	2
Pedagogy	0	1	0	4	0	0	2
Lesson Plan Writing	0	0	0	2	0	2	3
Exemplar Models	0	0	0	4	1	0	2
Classroom management	1	0	1	4	1	0	0
Assessment creation	0	0	0	3	0	2	2
Data tracking	0	0	0	3	1	1	2

Not only were the beginning teachers surveyed, but the three beginning teacher mentors that served on the CART were also surveyed. The results are described below.

Two of the mentors both indicated that they had five beginning teachers each to mentor during the previous school year. One of the mentors indicated that he/she had two beginning teachers to mentor that year. The three ratings for the overall quality of the beginning teacher induction program from the year before were average (1), good (1) and excellent (1). When asked how well-prepared they felt as mentors to deal with challenges, two of the mentors said moderately prepared while one of the mentors said very prepared.

When the mentor teachers were asked about the biggest struggles they saw in their beginning teachers, they had various responses. One of the mentors shared that finding a time to meet with the mentees was the most challenging part. Another mentor shared that working with beginning teachers who started midyear was incredibly challenging. The third mentor shared that helping beginning teachers with classroom management and lesson plan creating was the most challenging.

All of the mentors shared that they have been able to effectively help their mentees in the area of classroom management and two of the three mentors also added building relationships as an area where they have been able to provide support. Only one mentor of the three said that they were able to provide curriculum support. The mentors also shared a few things that could be added to the induction program to help their mentor relationship. The most common answer, provided by two mentors, was the need for common time to meet with their mentees.

When mentors were asked about the amount of time the beginning teacher induction program spent on subject matter content and pedagogy, all three of the mentors shared that neither too much nor too little time was spent on this item. When asked about the amount of time

spent on lesson plan writing, one mentor said neither too much or too little, while another said slightly too little, and another said moderately too little.

When the mentor teachers were surveyed about exemplar models for teaching, two of the three mentors said that neither too much nor too little time was spent here, while the third mentor said that slightly too little time was spent here. When asked about assessment creation, two mentor teachers shared that the right amount of time was spent on this, while the third mentor shared that it was slightly too little time spent on this topic. Lastly, when the mentor teachers were asked about the amount of time spent on data tracking, two mentor teachers shared that it was neither too much nor too little, while the third mentor shared that it was slightly too little time spent on data tracking.

Collaboration Action Research Cycle 2 Interview Data Analysis

In this section, data from the interviews with beginning teachers as part of Cycle 1 will be reported and analyzed. The analyzing of this data is part of Cycle 2 while the actual conducting of the interviews was part of the end of Cycle 1. The interview question has been shared as it was asked and then the summary of the responses, including key numbers and quotes has been shared. The interviews with beginning teachers were conducted face-to-face and one-on-one. They were recorded and anecdotal notes were also taken during the interview. These interviews were held in December of 2019 on campus of the school used in this study. The researcher, who is also the principal of the school, conducted the interviews. The researcher will also summarize the implications of the data findings.

The researcher transcribed all of the interviews. Then, the transcription records were then printed as hard copies multiple times. The researcher analyzed the data following guidance from Saldaña (2014). The researcher first read through the transcripts to look for major themes aligned

with the themes of the conceptual framework: focus, collaboration and reflection. Then, the researcher read the transcripts again, highlighting specific details and quotes that pertained to each of the areas of focus, collaboration and reflection. The researcher used different colored pens and highlighters to code these themes. Upon other reading of the data, the researcher looked for similarities and differences among the groups and themes to ensure nothing was overlooked.

The researcher had to reread the data to code it properly. The coding nodes are not always obvious upon a first, or even second read. The researcher reread data multiple times to ensure all proper nodes were selected in the coding process. After the researcher felt that the coding had been completed appropriately and successfully, the researcher then described the themes and main characteristics that resulted from the coding. Connections were made between the data and the research questions originally defined. It is important for the researcher to ensure that the connections between the themes which emerged and the connections to the research questions were properly expounded upon. Then, the question was asked: “How does the information in this particular category help me understand my research topic and answer my research question?” (Mertler, 2019).

The researcher must not only look for the common themes and answers to the research questions, but also for data that conflicts with the common themes and patterns which may emerge. These insights are crucial to the reflection upon the research questions as well. This leads to the reflection that comes from interpreting the data once it has been organized and simplified. The researcher should identify aspects in the data that answer the research questions, or have implications on future related work (Mertler, 2019).

Interview Question 1: What element of the beginning teacher induction program helped you the most? When beginning teachers were asked what element of the beginning teacher

induction program helped them the most, six teachers said their school based mentor. Beginning teachers described the ways in which their mentor was helpful listing elements such as open communication and check-ins (4 of 9), helping with any task or issue (1 of 9), and giving practical information (1 of 9). One teacher said “I can talk to her anytime I feel like. My mentor knows what we are going through here at this school whereas the district people do not, so I definitely feel more connected, more in touch, with my mentor.”

Interview Question 2: If you could change one thing about last school year, what would it be? Beginning teachers were asked what they would change about the previous school year. There was very little overlap in answers. One beginning teacher shared that he/she wished they “had a better mentor.” This person elaborated by sharing that his/her mentor had “too much on her plate” and it prevented the beginning teacher from getting resources in a timely manner when he/she needed them. Two beginning teachers shared that they needed more time to adjust and transition into the role of teaching and felt as though they had been “thrown into the fire.” Other responses included more student data, a better instructional coach and collaboration. One person also indicated that they did not have any recommendations for anything they would change.

Interview Question 3: In what ways did you feel supported last school year? Beginning teachers were asked the ways in which they felt supported during the previous school year. One person indicated that he/she did not feel supported at all. Two people indicated that they valued the support they received from administrators and four people valued the support they received from their mentor or coach. Two people indicated that their most valuable support came from their co-teacher or grade level teachers.

Interview Question 4: In what ways did you not feel supported last school year? Beginning teachers were asked to list areas where support could have been improved during the

previous year. Two beginning teachers said that they needed more support in the area of classroom management. Another two beginning teachers said that they needed instructional support. One teacher indicated that they would have liked more support from the teachers area him/her, collegial relationships. One teacher indicated that he/she would have liked more support from the district level. Two beginning teachers were not sure what areas they needed more support in.

Interview Question 5: Tell me about the collaboration you had with other teachers last year. When asked about the collaboration that occurred between themselves and other teachers during the previous year, two teachers said that there was not any collaboration. Five teachers shared that they collaborated with other teachers through like-content area planning or grade level meetings. One teacher indicated that they collaborated with others during district beginning teacher support meetings.

Interview Question 6: How often did you reflect as an educator last school year? Beginning teachers were asked how often they reflected during the previous year. Six teachers indicated that they reflected daily. One teacher reflected weekly, and two teachers reflected monthly. When asked in the manner in which this reflection occurred, five teachers shared that they replayed the lesson(s) they taught in their mind. One teacher utilized the reflection portion on the beginning teacher log and two teachers sat in a quiet space while they thought through their day.

Interview Question 7: Do you know what the goals of the school were last year? When beginning teachers were asked if they knew what the school goals were, five teachers answered affirmatively yes and had the goals correctly identified. Two additional teachers also answered

affirmatively yes but had the goals incorrectly identified. Two teachers said that they did not know what the school goals were.

Interview Question 8: What were your goals as a teacher last school year? Beginning teachers were asked if they had professional goals for themselves, personally. Seven teachers said that they did have specific professional goals. One teacher had the goal of doing as good as she had done the previous year. Four teachers indicated that their goals were to help students find their purpose and build relationships with them. Two teachers desired to grow in their content knowledge while two additional teachers did not have any goals, but just wanted to “survive.”

Interview Question 9: Do you feel that you grew as a teacher last year? How so? Teachers were asked did they feel as if they grew during the previous year and if so, how did they grow. Seven teachers indicated that they did feel as though they grew. Five indicated that they grew in the instructional real while one grew in his/her relationship building with students and one other teacher grew in his/her time management skills.

Interview Question 10: What types/kinds of professional development (PD) did you receive last year? Which was the most beneficial? This question asked beginning teachers about the types of professional development (PD) they received, and which was the most beneficial. Six teachers indicated that they did receive professional development during the previous year while two teachers indicated that they did not receive any professional development and one teacher was unsure. Three of the teachers indicated the district’s technology sponsored conference was the most beneficial PD they received throughout the year. Two teachers indicated that the school level professional learning community (PLC) meetings were helpful. One teacher took advantage of online professional development while one additional teacher

found the district's New Teacher Orientation training at the beginning of the school year to be the most helpful.

Interview Question 11: Did you get any feedback from your mentor last year? If so, what is helpful? Did you put the feedback to use? If so, how quickly? Beginning teachers were asked if they received feedback from their mentor during the previous school year. Seven teachers responded yes they did receive feedback while two teachers said they did not receive feedback. After asking if they received feedback, beginning teachers were asked if the feedback was helpful. Six teachers indicated that the feedback was helpful while one teacher was indifferent about the feedback. One teacher commented saying "I really like the idea of mentors; having someone to talk to and give you advice is helpful." Two of the teachers put the feedback to use within a day or two. Another five teachers put the feedback to use within two weeks. Another teacher was unsure if he/she utilized the feedback.

Interview Question 12: Did you get any feedback from your Principal/Assistant Principal last year? If so, was it helpful? Did you put the feedback to use? If so, how quickly? Feedback from the administrative team, namely the principal and assistant principal was the focus on this question. All nine beginning teachers shared that they did receive feedback from the administrative team, and they all found it helpful. Two teachers indicated that they put the feedback to use within a day or two, four put the feedback to use within the same week and three indicated that he/she put the feedback to use within two weeks.

Interview Question 13: What is missing from the current beginning teacher induction program? Beginning teachers were asked "what is missing from the current beginning teacher induction program?" The most common response was more classroom management training with six teachers identifying this need. One of these teachers recommended that the school or district

create a “tough kid toolbox” as a resource for teachers to use to help support students who can be difficult to work with and teach. One teacher needed general support while another teacher needed support with licensure and continuing education information. One teacher needed training for mental health issues and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Interview Question 14: Would you recommend teaching as a career to others? Beginning teachers were asked if they would recommend teaching as a career to others. Eight teachers said that they would while one said that they may or may not. Four of the teachers who said yes made additional comments though, stating things like “make sure you want it” and “it is not for everyone.”

Interview Question 15: How would you describe your job satisfaction? When asked “How would you describe your job satisfaction?” two teachers said that they were very satisfied with their job, two teachers were satisfied, and four teachers “enjoyed” their job. One teacher said that he/she found the job of teaching to be frustrating and challenging.

As a result of the interview data from Cycle 1 which was analyzed at the beginning of Cycle 2, the CART met to review the data and discuss its implications. The CART decided that the data showed that beginning teachers valued reflection and were practicing reflection, but the beginning teachers needed a more structured focus to their reflection. As a result of this finding, the CART added the following two questions to the school’s beginning teacher mentor log. The purpose of this mentor log was part of a state requirement which documented communication between beginning teachers and mentors. While simple in nature and originally created by the district for state compliance, the CART saw that there was a need for more detail as the beginning teacher data indicated this need. Beginning teachers were asking for support in specific areas, namely lesson planning, assessment creation and data tracking. Thus, the CART

decided that the team would edit the beginning teacher mentor log to have checkboxes for these items. The data also showed that beginning teachers valued well-being check-ins with their mentor. Time to communicate as human beings was requested by beginning teachers. Therefore, well-being check-ins were also added as a checkbox on the revised log. The CART's reasoning behind these checkboxes was that this would provide a visual reminder for beginning teachers and mentors of items that could be discussed during the weekly meetings. It could serve as a running agenda for focus, reflection and collaboration.

Also, since the responses from the beginning teachers and CART survey alike, indicted a high level of support was needed with lesson planning and classroom management, the CART thought about how a reflection question around both of these items could be helpful. The CART discussed the best way to approach both topics of lesson planning and classroom management and developed these two questions to add to the log (1) This month, has your classroom management included mostly positive narration or negative narration? What is one thing you can do differently this upcoming week to improve your classroom management? and (2) Have you been diligent in your lesson preparation this month? What is one improvement you can make in your lesson preparation this upcoming week to increase the learning in your classroom? Since beginning teachers complete these logs alongside their mentor each month, the CART felt as though these two questions would open up more conversation among the beginning teacher and mentor. The CART also designed the questions desiring that the openness of the questions would encourage vulnerability and reflective conversation and collaboration between beginning teacher and mentor. The revised beginning teacher mentor log can be viewed in Appendix F

Collaboration Action Research Cycle 3 Interview Data Analysis

In this section, data from the interviews with beginning teachers as part of Cycle 3 will be reported and analyzed. The conducting of the interviews and the analyzing of the data from the interviews was all part of Cycle 3. The interview questions have been shared as they were read and also included is the summary of the responses, including key numbers and quotes. The interviews with beginning teachers were conducted virtually through Google Meet video conferencing and one-on-one. They were recorded and anecdotal notes were also taken during the interview. These interviews were held in June of 2020. Both the interviewer as well as the interviewee participated in the interview remotely as the school building was closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher, who is also the principal of the school, conducted the interviews. The researcher will also summarize the implications of the data findings.

Interview Question 1: What element of the beginning teacher induction program helped you the most? When beginning teachers were asked what element of the beginning teacher induction program helped them the most, six teachers said their school based mentor. One teacher shared that their school based mentor was “the most consistent of all.” Other elements mentioned were New Teacher Orientation (one), Professional Learning Communities (one) and the district mentor (two).

Interview Question 2: Did you find the new elements of the beginning teacher induction program revamping helpful? If so, how and in what ways? What element of the beginning teacher induction program revamping was most helpful? As part of Cycle 2, the beginning teacher mentor log was revamped to include reflection prompts and guiding points of focus for conversation. Beginning teachers were asked if these revamping elements were helpful. Three teachers said no while eight said yes. Of the eight teachers who indicated the revamping elements

were helpful, two shared that the reflection questions guided their thinking; five shared that they benefited from forced reflection and found it helpful; one indicated that the guiding points for conversation were helpful in ensuring the beginning teacher and the mentor covered all critical areas for conversation.

Interview Question 3: Did you feel more supported as a beginning teacher during semester 1 or semester 2? What do you attribute this to? Beginning teachers were asked what semester, 1 or 2, did they feel most supported during the 2019-2020 school year. Five teachers indicated that semester 1 was a more supportive time for them while five other teachers indicated that both semesters were about the same. One teacher who indicated semester 1 in his/her answer, shared that he/she felt this way because he/she had gained much more confidence by the time semester 2 began. Two of the teachers who said both semesters were about the same indicated that their answer was based upon the consistent Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and administrative support in the building. Several of the teachers who indicated semester 1 was a more supportive time for them mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic and not seeing their school mentor or district mentor face-to-face during semester 2. One teacher also mentioned that there was a relocating of nine classrooms on the campus at the end of semester 1 and thus semester 2 started off “new and rocky” as a result.

Interview Question 4: What could be done to better support you as a beginning teacher? Beginning teachers were asked about things that could have been done to improve their experience as a beginning teacher in the area of support. One teacher indicated that he/she would have liked to be in closer proximity to the main office and/or veteran teachers. Two teachers indicated that they did not have any areas for improvement. Four teachers said more instructional

support and strategies would have been helpful. Also noteworthy, three teachers said they could have used more support in the area of classroom management.

Interview Question 5: Do you feel the collaboration with other teachers is beneficial? Could it be improved in any way? If so, how? Beginning teachers were asked about the collaboration they have with other teachers. Ten of the respondents shared that they find collaboration beneficial. When asked how collaboration with other teachers could be improved, four teachers shared that content planning time at the school and/or district level would be beneficial. Two teachers felt not having enough time to collaborate was the biggest hindrance to collaboration while one teacher felt team building at the school level would help collaboration. Additionally, two teachers thought the collaboration did not need to be improved.

Interview Question 6: Did you practice reflecting this school year? When and how often? When beginning teachers were asked specifically about their process of reflection, ten out of eleven teachers indicated that they practice the art of reflection. Of these ten, seven of them shared that they reflect daily while the other three indicated that they reflect at least once per week. When asked about specific ways in which reflection occurs, five shared that they meditate or think as their reflection practice. Two shared reflections occur through the beginning teacher log, two journal their reflections and one reflects on his/her lesson plans.

Interview Question 7: Did you have personal goals this school year? If so, what were they and did you meet them? Beginning teachers were asked if they had professional goals for themselves, personally. All ten teachers said that they did. When asked if they met their goals, five teachers indicated that they were not sure as a result of COVID-19. Three teachers said yes, they did meet their goals. Two teachers said that they did not meet their goals. Of the teachers

that did meet their goals, they attributed it to growing in their content knowledge, looping with students and being more organized with their planning.

Interview Question 8: Do you know what the school goals were for this year? Were they met? When beginning teachers were asked if they knew what the school goals were, three teachers answered affirmatively yes and had the goals correctly identified. Three additional teachers also answered affirmatively yes but had the goals incorrectly identified. Four teachers said that they did not know what the school goals were.

Interview Question 9: Do you feel that you grew as a teacher this year? If so, when did the most growth occur? What do you attribute it to? Beginning teachers were asked about their personal growth and what they contributed it to for the year. Eight teachers shared that they grew, and one teacher said he/she grew some. The tenth teacher shared that he/she did not grow in his/her content knowledge but did grow in his/her relationship building. Overwhelmingly, teachers (five) stated that their support system is what they attributed their growth to. Two teachers stated that their growth was due in part to growing with students and two others stated that they grew as a result of personal reflection.

Interview Question 10: What types/kinds of professional development (PD) did you receive this year? Which was the most beneficial? This question asked beginning teachers about the types of professional development (PD) they received, and which was the most beneficial. Seven of the teachers indicated the district's technology sponsored conference was the most beneficial PD they received throughout the year. They shared that the lesson planning tools, technology tools, content tips and relationship building resources shared as part of this training were most helpful. Four teachers indicated that the school level social-emotional learning (SEL) training was helpful. Two beginning teachers shared that they had a classroom management

training, and it was beneficial to them. One teacher shared that “more content PD from the district is needed” as the one hour of content support for the year was not beneficial.

Interview Question 11: Did you get any feedback from your mentor this year? If so, what is helpful? Did you put the feedback to use? If so, how quickly? Beginning teachers were asked if they received feedback from their mentor during the school year. Nine teachers responded yes they did receive feedback. One person shared that they had communication with their mentor, but it was in a check-in format and not true feedback. After asking if they received feedback, beginning teachers were asked if the feedback was helpful. Eight of the nine teachers who received feedback said yes, the feedback was helpful. One of the nine teachers said the feedback was somewhat helpful. Four of the nine teachers put the feedback to use within a day or two. Another four of the nine teachers put the feedback to use within two weeks. The ninth teacher put the feedback to use within four weeks.

Interview Question 12: Did you get any feedback from your Principal/Assistant Principal last year? If so, was it helpful? Did you put the feedback to use? If so, how quickly? Feedback from the administrative team, namely the principal and assistant principal was the focus on this question. All ten of the beginning teachers shared that they did receive feedback from the administrative team. Five teachers indicated that they put the feedback to use within a day or two, three put the feedback to use within the same week and one indicated that he/she put the feedback to use within two weeks.

Interview Question 13: What is missing from the current beginning teacher induction program? Beginning teachers were asked “what is missing from the current beginning teacher induction program?” The most common responses were more district/school mentors and more time with them, more school level group meetings instead of district level group meetings, and

curriculum support. It is also worth noting that two participants indicated that they would not add anything to the current induction program.

Interview Question 14: Would you recommend teaching as a career to others? Beginning teachers were asked if they would recommend teaching as a career to others. Nine teachers said that they would while one said that they would not. Four of the teachers who said yes made additional comments though, stating things like “yes...if you are passionate about kids” and “yes...but it is not for everyone.”

Interview Question 15: How would you describe your job satisfaction and what contributed to it? When asked “How would you describe your job satisfaction?” seven teachers responded that they were satisfied with their job while three teachers responded that they were very satisfied. As the greatest factors for contributing to their job satisfaction, the family work environment was at the top of the list. Students, growth and administration were all tied for second.

Results

The results from the study have been broken down according to the key themes as well as the study questions. The key findings and quotes from the data have been synthesized in Table 8.

Study Question Summary

The first study question was “What elements of mentor support are most effective from the perception of beginning teachers in a rural middle school setting?” Data analysis of interviews conducted as part of the collaborative action research cycles indicated that beginning teachers highly valued the relationship with their mentors because of the areas of open communication and check-ins. Beginning teachers indicated that the check-ins provided times where they could discuss practical information and procedures or get help in troubleshooting a

Table 8

Study Questions and Key Findings

Study Question	Focus Theme	Reflection Theme	Collaboration Theme	Key Findings	Quotations
1. What elements of mentor support are most effective from the perception of beginning teachers in a rural middle school setting?			X	<p>4 out of 9 beginning teachers shared that open communication and check-ins with their mentors were very helpful.</p> <p>2 out of 9 beginning teachers shared that the help with “random tasks as they arise” and giving “practical information and solutions” from their mentors was helpful.</p> <p>Consistent from several beginning teachers was that there is a need for frequent time devoted solely to beginning teacher support. One beginning teacher specifically shared that it was difficult at times to get timely feedback or help from mentors when urgent issues arose. Thus, 2 beginning teachers shared that regular and consistent meeting times would be helpful.</p> <p>Three beginning teachers specifically expressed the need to receive support for working with challenging students.</p>	<p>“ I can talk to her anytime I feel like. My mentor knows what we are going through here at this school whereas the district people do not, so I definitely feel more connected, more in touch, with my mentor.”</p> <p>“My mentor had too much on her plate.”</p>

Table 8 (continued)

Study Question	Focus Theme	Reflection Theme	Collaboration Theme	Key Findings	Quotations
<p>2. What elements make an effective beginning teacher induction program in a rural middle school setting from the perception of a mentor teacher?</p>		X		<p>2 of the 3 mentors indicated they need more adequate time to meet and plan with their beginning teachers. One mentor shared that it was more difficult to adequately support beginning teachers who start midyear because a routine and rhythm has already been set. This mentor shared that the beginning teacher(s) had also missed all of the “back to school” trainings and workdays.</p> <p>All 3 mentors shared that the top areas they see beginning teachers needing support in are classroom management and lesson planning.</p> <p>Only 1 mentor mentioned relationship building outside of the classroom in extra-curricular activities, such as sports, dances, etc.</p>	<p>“I wish I had the same planning period as my BTs.”</p> <p>“It is hard to observe my BTs when we do not have the same planning period.”</p> <p>Lesson planning support was a common area of concern in two different question responses.</p> <p>“I think we have to figure out ways to reduce the paperwork beginning teachers are expected to complete.”</p>

Table 8 (continued)

Study Question	Focus Theme	Reflection Theme	Collaboration Theme	Key Findings	Quotations
<p>3. How does the help mentors provide beginning teachers in the areas of focus, collaboration and reflection increase the sense of effectiveness of beginning teachers?</p>	X	X	X	<p>4 out of 9 beginning teachers indicated that they felt supported by their mentor.</p> <p>2 of the 9 beginning teachers are quoted expressing the huge role their mentor played in helping them navigate teaching and prevent them from giving up.</p> <p>7 out of 9 beginning teachers said that they met their goals. This builds feelings of effectiveness.</p> <p>2 of 9 beginning teachers expressed that the knowledge and collaboration that came out of the Professional Learning Committee (PLC) meetings was helpful.</p> <p>2 of out 9 beginning teachers said that they relied heavily on their district beginning teacher mentor for support and this contributing to their success.</p>	<p>My mentor is “helping me survive.”</p> <p>I feel as though I have been “thrown into the fire.”</p>

Table 8 (continued)

Study Question	Focus Theme	Reflection Theme	Collaboration Theme	Key Findings	Quotations
4. What are the various contributions mentors made that helped retain teachers?			X	<p>6 out of 9 beginning teachers said that their mentor was the most helpful part of the beginning teacher induction program. 1 out of 9 beginning teachers said that the district mentor was the most helpful part of the beginning teacher induction program.</p> <p>The family work environment was the top factor contributing to beginning teacher job satisfaction in Cycle 3 interviews. Satisfied workers remain in their jobs longer and thus this demonstrates that the family atmosphere mentors help to foster through open communication and personal relationships helps retain teachers.</p>	<p>My mentor was the “most consistent of all.”</p> <p>My “district mentor seems to come by at just the right time.”</p>

Table 8 (continued)

Study Question	Focus Theme	Reflection Theme	Collaboration Theme	Key Findings	Quotations
5. What did the researcher learn about the leadership skills required to implement an induction program in a rural middle school?	X	X	X	<p>All 9 beginning teachers shared that they did indeed receive feedback from administration, that the feedback was helpful and that they put the feedback to use within two weeks or less. This was a teachable moment to help leaders realize that regular feedback and meeting time is crucial. The researcher learned that the first way to support beginning teachers is by showing up and being present through the easy days as well as the hardest days. The researcher also learned that transparency is a necessary skill when supporting beginning teachers. 4 out of 9 beginning teachers said they would recommend teaching to others but “make sure you want it [teaching career]” and “it is not for everyone.”</p>	<p>A beginning teacher shared “it would be helpful to have a tough kid toolbox.”</p> <p>“Just a quick note to say thank you for taking your time to meet with BTs like me. You continue to motivate everyone even when you are constantly facing tough decisions. You look out for all of your employees and give grace even when we are being the challenge. Although your acts of kindness may seem small to you they are important to me. So.... I just want to say thank you for always looking out for everyone else!”</p> <p>One teacher found teaching “frustrating and challenging” and thus it is important to define leadership practices which will provide a safe outlet for beginning teachers in order to decrease these negative feelings.</p>

Table 8 (continued)

Study Question	Focus Theme	Reflection Theme	Collaboration Theme	Key Findings	Quotations
				<p>This shows that during recruiting events and interviews, it is important to develop a clear vision for possible teaching candidates as much as possible.</p>	

specific issue. Often times, these were areas where a face-to-face conversation was highly more beneficial than an email or text message. Beginning teachers also indicated that being able to communicate honest and frankly with an experienced teacher helped give relief for difficult or trying situations. In both interview rounds, six beginning teachers out of nine indicated that their school based mentor was the most helpful part of the entire beginning teacher induction program. Beginning teachers also shared that mentor support was effective because the mentor was consistent. Being located within the same building every day, the beginning teachers always knew how and where to find their mentor when they needed support.

The second study question was “What elements make an effective beginning teacher induction program in a rural middle school setting from the perception of a mentor teacher?” Data analysis as conducted as part of the collaborative action research cycles indicated that mentor teachers desired to have more time with their beginning teachers. Due to the fact that mentor teachers have several beginning teachers to mentor, it made it challenging to find time to meet with beginning teachers one-on-one as often and as long as they would like. Mentors indicated that beginning teachers needed a great focus on lesson plan writing and exemplar models of teaching. In addition, more classroom management training, assessment creation training and data tracking training were all professional development areas that mentors identified as crucial for an effective induction program for beginning teachers.

The third study question was “How does the help mentors provide beginning teachers in the areas of focus, collaboration and reflection increase the sense of effectiveness of beginning teachers?” All of the beginning teachers shared that their school-based mentor was helpful. The biggest takeaways from these meetings were the ability to get common questions answered and troubleshooting classroom and student issues. In talking through these with beginning teachers,

they shared that this method of collaboration also helped their reflection. Beginning teachers also shared that having a mentor who worked at the same school as they did each day, they were able to collaborate more frequently than they were with the district mentor. This also allowed for closer proximity to the mentor and thus when questions arose, they were able to walk down the hall to hold a conversation with their mentor which would help them re-focus on the important task at hand.

The fourth study question was “What are the various contributions mentors made that helped retain teachers?” Throughout the interviews, almost all beginning teachers stated that they would recommend teaching as a career to others. The majority of beginning teachers were also satisfied with their job. These answers are due in part to the support of the mentor role considering how the majority of beginning teachers indicated that their mentor was the most helpful part of the induction program. The action steps that the mentors took to help retain teachers primarily focused on support, but also included the feedback mentors provided to beginning teachers. Teachers indicated that their mentor had a good understanding of the innerworkings of the school and the educational pathway for students. This knowledge helped mentors provide sound advice and guidance when beginning teachers encountered obstacles. In the second set of interviews as part of collaborative action research Cycle 3, the family work environment was the top factor contributing to beginning teacher job satisfaction. Satisfied workers remain in their jobs longer and thus this demonstrates that the family atmosphere mentors help to foster through open communication and personal relationships helps retain teachers.

The fifth study question was “What did the researcher learn about the leadership skills required to implement an induction program in a rural middle school?” The researcher learned

that the first way to support beginning teachers is by showing up and being present through the easy days as well as the hardest days. As I met with beginning teachers and the CART, I kept a notebook where I recorded notes and key ideas from our conversations and data analysis discussion. I was able to reflect on these conversations and re-read the notes over time to continue my personal reflection and growth. This leadership skill of being present and having a listening ear doesn't stand out as a flashy, news-worthy action item, but beginning teachers highly value someone who is not only a listening ear, but who has insight and advice to give in different situations. Knowing where to do to find help and that someone is willing to help you goes a long way with beginning teachers. The researcher also learned the importance of building trust and supporting beginning teachers. It was evident in the beginning teacher interviews that administrative support was very valuable and appreciated. As a leader, it is important to sustain activities that prove to be crucial to those that you are leading. As a researcher, I will remember this going forward.

Results Summary

In summary, the data shows that beginning teachers highly value their school-based mentor. Beginning teachers also highly value time to talk and troubleshoot with their school-based mentor as a school-based mentor understands the dynamics and nuances of the specific school, whereas a district mentor does not always. Beginning teachers also desire to have time to build community and relationships with other beginning teachers, but also staff members at large. Beginning teachers also report that feedback from administration is always helpful and welcomed. There is also an intense need for subject and content specific professional development specifically pertaining to lesson planning and assessment creation, as well as more classroom management professional development.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recruiting and retaining high quality teachers is vital to the success of public education (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In a small, rural North Carolina school district, it is consistently difficult to accomplish this important task. The aim of this study was to help educators in a small, rural school district develop a common understanding and plan for supporting beginning teachers with the short-term goal of increasing teacher retention and a long-term goal of increasing student achievement. This study intended to provide insight on the following areas related to beginning teacher induction in rural school districts: preservice preparation changes, common challenges for beginning teachers, supports for beginning teachers and an idea of teacher support founded on the ideas of focus, collaboration and reflection. The knowledge gained through this study is being used to improve the current beginning teacher induction program at this rural middle school.

The data shows that beginning teachers highly value their school-based mentor. Beginning teachers also highly value time to talk and troubleshoot with their school-based mentor as a school-based mentor understands the dynamics and nuances of the specific school, whereas a district mentor does not always. Beginning teachers also desire to have time to build community and relationships with other beginning teachers, but also staff members at large. Beginning teachers also report that feedback from administration is always helpful and welcomed. There is also an intense need for subject and content specific professional development specifically pertaining to lesson planning and assessment creation, as well as more classroom management professional development.

The results from the study have been broken down according to the key themes as well as the study questions. The key findings and quotes from the data have been synthesized in Table 8.

Connections to Literature Review

The results from this study confirm that there is a high level of turnover among beginning teachers, specifically in the first few years of teaching. The teacher turnover rates from the school district used in this study as well as the percentages of beginning teachers in year 1 of service participating in this study align with other research. Severe teacher shortages are confronting public schools, and attrition of teachers is a concern for administrators as teacher turnover is higher in the first few years than turnover rates in other professions (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Ingersoll & Perda, 2010). Schools with students from low income families in difficult communities often have the highest new teacher attrition rates (Graziano, 2005). For these same communities riddled with low income families, when the costs of teacher turnover is calculated as a percentage of the school district budget, rural school districts are significantly more impacted by these turnovers (Reeves, 2003).

Beginning teachers participating in this study shared comments including “my mentor is helping me survive” and “I feel as though I have been thrown into the fire.” Both of these quotations align with the research of professor Dr. Rebecca Anhorn. Dr. Anhorn works with the teacher education programs at Minot State University in Minot, North Dakota, and she has been so bold as to refer to education as a profession that “eats their young” (Anhorn, 2008, p. 15).

Goodpaster et al.(2012) explain that teaching in an urban setting and being successful may require different form that teaching in a rural setting and finding success. Rural educators have to find ways to assimilate into the communities around them (012). Through the research in

this study, one of the mentors that was a part of the CART recognized this. This mentor in particular mentioned the importance of beginning teachers building relationships with students outside of the classroom, through activities such as sports and other extra-curriculars. Eppley (2009) agrees with both Goodpaster and the research from this study, sharing that rural districts face many challenges, one in particular being access to resources for teachers, such as teaching and lesson planning documents.

In the feedback from beginning teachers, several expressed that crucial to success and job satisfaction is ensuring that teaching is the right fit for oneself and certainly the school of choice matters. Kang and Berliner's (2012) research aligned with these beginning teacher comments as they shared that positive results with teaching are more likely if the community and school is a good fit for the individual teacher.

In Darling-Hammond's (2017) writings, she discusses the teaching skills one needs in order to be successful in helping students acquire the complex skills they need for live in the 21st century. Darling-Hammond studied a variety of professional development initiatives. Of the features of effective professional development mentioned in Darling-Hammond's writing, this study overlaps in the areas of content specific, or lessoned focused, includes reflection component and provides coaching and/or support (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

In Ingersoll's (2012) writings, it is shared that induction programs can have an impact on teacher retention. While the researcher in this study certainly thinks that is true, this study does not have enough data to make a comment on this claim. From this study's research one could assume that the induction program is of high quality due to the number of teachers (6 of 9) that were satisfied with their mentor, but this does not explain the high teacher turnover rate across the district.

Beginning teachers and mentors alike in this study repeatedly shared that the frequency and length of collaboration time between beginning teachers and mentors is important. This aligns with the work of Bastain and Marks (2017) which reported that teachers who had at least one instructional coaching visit per month had significantly higher teacher value-added estimates. In contrast though, the beginning teacher and mentor relationships in this study were not specifically instructional coaching visits but routine mentor meetings. Elements of the routine mentor meetings would include check-in support and troubleshooting, rather than intense coaching. Moving the mentor roles to more of coach roles in the school used in this study should be taken into consideration. According to Bastain and Marks, there would be benefits in the achievement scores of students if a move to a coaching model was adopted.

One of the suggestions of a mentor who participated in this study was to find a way to decrease the amount of paperwork required of beginning teachers. This suggestion aligns with the work of Goodwin who mentions the “massive amounts” of paperwork required for teachers. Goodwin specifically references lesson planning, one of the common struggles identified by the majority of beginning teachers and mentors in this study (Goodwin, 2012). Also aligning with this dissertation study is Wong’s work highlighting teacher quality as the single greatest factor for impacting student achievement. As mentioned earlier in this dissertation study, 5 of the 9 beginning teachers who participated were teaching state tested subjects. Considering this means that the school has beginning teachers in five of the seven tested subject area roles. It is clear as to how student achievement data would be significantly impacted when this many teachers of tested subjects are just beginning, unexperienced and largely untrained.

While much of the research that has previously been conducted aligns with the findings in this study, one area that varied some was in the area of teacher isolation. Cochran-Smith wrote

about the power in collegiality within schools (Cochran-Smith, 1991), while Valli shared the high percentages of minimal adult to adult interactions normally found in schools. In comparison to the school studied in this dissertation, the overwhelming response to the question regarding school choice for teachers was their collegial relationships and connections (Valli, 1992). This is not to say that one could rule out teachers in this study never experienced feelings of isolation, but that there were other factors more concerning for the beginning teachers surveyed and interviewed.

Lastly, in 2002, Horn et al. listed nine elements that induction programs should include. They include: Orientation, Mentoring, Adjustment of working conditions, Release time, Professional development opportunities, Teacher assessment, Program evaluation, and Follow-up into the second year (Horn et al., 2002). While all of these nine were touched upon in some capacity in the responses from beginning teachers and/or mentors, the most common were mentoring, release time and professional development opportunities.

Changes to the Leader's Practice

As a result of this study, there are some continuations that will take place. First of all, the researcher met with the superintendent of the district and discussed the findings. The researcher shared what she had learned from studying the beginning teachers as the specific school used in the study. The superintendent then asked the researcher to be prepared for subsequent meetings where the researcher would share the study findings with members of the beginning teacher support program within the district.

Next, the researcher began holding meetings at the study school with beginning teachers. This was something that was directly brought up during the interview process. The researcher scheduled two check-in support meetings for all of the beginning teachers at the school each

month. These meetings were optional, but they provided beginning teachers with a time to connect with each other and the leader of the school. Beginning teachers were asked the same two questions at each meeting: (1) what is a success you have experienced in the past two weeks; (2) what is a challenge you have experienced in the past two weeks. Beginning teachers and the research talked through these questions and offered ideas and solutions while celebrating the successes. Beginning teachers seemed to appreciate a time to ask questions without more experienced teachers around.

Then, the researcher continued the meetings with the beginning teachers by scheduling a monthly luncheon with all beginning teachers. This meeting had no formal agenda and was designed to be a time for beginning teachers to hold conversations with administrators about any subject they desired. This time was used less for work conversations and more for personal conversations, helping beginning teachers to see administrators as human beings with families and hobbies outside of school. This time proved to be beneficial as administrators were able to connect with beginning teachers to learn more about their lives outside of school. This time seemed to increase the social-emotional well-being of the beginning teachers. It is also the goal that when polled at the end of the year about their feelings of connectedness to the school, the beginning teachers would have positive responses. It is the researcher's goal that the research of VanderPyl (2007) would be true, that "the result of strong principals is a strong staff, demonstrating the trickle-down leadership".

Finally, the researcher has planned an end-of-year survey to be given to all beginning teachers. This survey will ask questions similar to the questions asked of beginning teachers on the North Carolina Teaching Working Conditions Survey. Questions relating to the study questions for this study will also be asked. The information and knowledge gained from this

survey will be used to continue improving the beginning teacher program at the participant school.

The data supports several recommendations for schools and districts. The first recommendation is for districts to be frequently reminded that some beginning teachers did not go through formal teacher preparation training at the university level. While many administrators may have gone a more traditional education pathway towards their career, not all current beginning teachers are the like. As a result, schools and districts should plan professional development and trainings for beginning teachers while keeping in mind the considerations of university level education courses and knowledge that beginning teachers may not have been exposed to yet.

Another implication from the findings is that over 63% of beginning teachers surveyed indicated that their decision to work at their current school was influenced by their friends or colleagues at the school. For school and district leaders, this should encourage leaders to provide social opportunities for teachers to network and build relationships with one another. The data supports the idea that teachers are more likely to stay longer in their school when they enjoy the people they work with.

The data also shows that beginning teachers are influenced by the location of the school. The data responses showed that the school's proximity to one's friends, family and home made a significant impact in school selection for the majority of participants. As a school leader, one should be reminded to look for qualified teaching applicants that are local or have ties to the community. This could increase the likelihood that a teacher will remain at the same school.

For the school and district represented in this study, only 37.5% of beginning teachers indicated that they could recommend the beginning teacher induction program to others. This is

concerning as the sole purpose of the induction program is to support and build up beginning teachers. If the goal is not being met, this warrants time and consideration spent to develop the program into a meaningful experience for beginning teachers.

The data also highlighted the overwhelming positive support beginning teachers experiences from administration. The researcher considered that the data could be skewed as it pertains to this topic due to the researcher's role as an administrator of the school, the researcher ultimately concluded that this was not likely the case. As a result, schools and districts could learn from the support administrators at the particular school are providing to beginning teachers.

In summary, schools and districts should inspect their beginning teacher data closely and ensure meetings are regularly held with beginning teachers where their feedback is sought out. Districts may likely find similar data as this study. For this study, the data shows that beginning teachers highly value their school-based mentor. Beginning teachers also highly value time to talk and troubleshoot with their school-based mentor as a school-based mentor understands the dynamics and nuances of the specific school, whereas a district mentor does not always. Beginning teachers also desire to have time to build community and relationships with other beginning teachers, but also staff members at large. Beginning teachers also report that feedback from administration is always helpful and welcomed. There is also an intense need for subject and content specific professional development as well as more classroom management professional development. The future of education can be shaped and improved, starting with an emphasis on beginning teacher support and mentors.

Positive Impacts from the Study

There were several areas of positive impact at the school level that resulted from this study. First, the school culture seemed to maintain a high positivity level. When the study began,

the researcher had recently been named as the new principal of the studied middle school. Being that the researcher had relationships to build and strength, the study provided a way for the researcher to quickly develop deep relationships with staff members. From holding the information session very early in the school year, to meeting one on one with beginning teachers and mentor teachers, the researcher took time to listen to the voices of the staff members. Making time to listen, rather than speak as the new school level leader proved to provide invaluable knowledge for the researcher as she continued to learn about the school to lead the school. Listening to the beginning teachers also helped them find their voice as new staff members. It also developed a sense of belonging and personal connection to the school. This work was done with beginning teachers and mentors, rather for beginning teachers and thus this seemed to increase the feelings of self-efficacy among staff members.

As mentioned previously, at the conclusion of Cycle 3, the CART met to discuss the findings from the last round of interview data. The CART discussed next steps that would be implemented at the school. One of these future implementations was bimonthly principal/beginning teacher meetings that would beginning in August 2020 for the 2020-2021 school year. As these meetings began in the fall of 2020 and continued through May 2021, the researcher received positive feedback from the beginning teachers regarding these meetings. The beginning teachers expressed that they felt a sense of peace having a safe space to talk with their principal about concerns, issues and successes they were having. It also offered a space where there was not as much pressure because all of the meeting attendees were beginning teachers, with the exception of the principal, and thus beginning teachers did not feel as though they may ask a “stupid” question in front of a veteran teacher. One teacher recently shared with the principal an email thanking her for holding these bimonthly meetings. The teachers shared the

following: “Just a quick note to say thank you for taking your time to meet with BTs like me. You continue to motivate everyone even when you are constantly facing tough decisions. You look out for all of your employees and give grace even when we are being the challenge. Although your acts of kindness may seem small to you they are important to me. So.... I just want to say thank you for always looking out for everyone else!”

Also, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these meetings offered a space for the principal to help beginning teachers navigate issues that were present as a result of remote learning and school closure. Beginning teachers would not have had this support avenue during the COVID-19 pandemic without the implicants from this research study.

One additional impact from this study was the scheduling of beginning teacher licensure meetings with the researcher and principal and first year beginning teachers. The researcher scheduled meeting with all of the first year beginning teachers and invited a representative from the local university’s teacher preparation program as well as the district teacher licensure specialist. Through these series of meetings in the fall of 2020, the first year beginning teachers at this study’s middle school of focus were able to receive timely, practical and useful information regarding how to begin the process of obtaining a North Carolina Teaching License. All of the beginning teachers that participated were extremely thankful and expressed an increase sense of confidence in navigating the normally confusing world of teacher licensure. The district’s licensure specialist also reached out to the researcher and principal to express gratitude for this work. The licensure specialist could already see the positive impact this increased support was having on the morale of the beginning teachers and this specialist anticipated that it would increase retention as well. It was anticipated to increase retention as getting a quick start

on the licensure process would hopefully avoid licensure issues in the spring of 2021 which could mean non-renewal for a first year beginning teacher.

Importance of Collaborative Action Research Team

From this study, the researcher learned the importance of a Collaborative Action Research Team (CART) and the benefits a CART can have within a school. The collaboration among the beginning teacher mentors was increased and their collaborative relationships were strengthened through the bimonthly meetings. Previously at this school beginning teacher mentors had very little interaction or collaboration with one another. The established CART team also benefited from the support provided from one another as all members navigated the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on schools. Navigating the education world in such unprecedented times was made a little easier by the collaboration, conversation and frequent communication among the CART. This allowed for the members to brainstorm ideas with one another and talk through possible solutions to educational issues as they arose.

As a scholarly practitioner and as a school principal, I have continued to utilize the idea of a CART since completing my work with the CART as part of this study. As a building principal, I developed an instructional leadership team within my school to function similarly to how the CART functioned in this study. We meet weekly to look at data, plan, troubleshoot and build the capacity of our school. The teamwork and collaboration that emerges from these meetings has transformed our work abilities and grown each member of the team professionally. It is also transforming our school. I do not think I will ever go back to professionally operating without a collaborative teaming structure in place after the knowledge I have gained through this study. I would recommend that others try this practice as well.

Suggestions for Similar, Future Studies

The researcher would offer a few suggestions to one considering a similar study. First, the researcher would include an additional survey at the end of Cycle 3. Along with the interview data collected in Cycle 3, it would have been beneficial to have beginning teachers and mentor teachers complete a similar survey as they began the study completing as part of Cycle 1. This would allow one to compare additional data to gather more insights related to the study. Because of the qualitative nature of the survey questions and results, the researcher would be interested in comparing two rounds of survey data to each other. Also, since the mentors were not interviewed formerly, and only anecdotal notes were recorded in the bimonthly CART meetings, results from a second survey would have been beneficial to have in order to compare to initial survey data. Trends in the survey responses as time progressed could be studied and this would allow for more information to be gathered, coded and analyzed. Therefore, allowing for more conclusions to possibly be drawn from the increase in data.

Conclusion

As a researcher and daily scholarly practitioner in the field of education, this study provided much insight into best practices for leading beginning teachers and mentors, as well as ideas for improvement at the school and district level.

In conclusion, schools should develop collaborative teams for beginning teacher mentors to work together as they support beginning teachers. Also, if it is possible to increase the number of mentors so that mentors have fewer beginning teachers to support, that would be helpful. Beginning teachers also appreciate the support and guidance from administration. They appreciate an “open door” policy where they have a regular time defined to ask questions and communicate with their supervisor(s). Beginning teachers also appreciate feedback from

administration and they are willing to put the feedback to use quickly. Beginning teachers also need defined time to meet with their mentor. This increases the accountability for mentor teachers as well, ensuring that meetings are not “forgotten about.”

When creating master schedules for schools, it would be helpful if beginning teachers and mentor teachers could have a common planning time. As beginning teachers commented that their time with their mentor was one of the only consistent things in their sphere of education, designated time to meet moved higher on the list of needs. It would also be helpful if time was intentionally built in to support beginning teachers in the areas of classroom management and lesson planning. These are two crucial areas where beginning teachers often need support.

As similar work is done as it relates to beginning teachers and mentor supports in schools, schools should consider aligning their beginning teacher support with the school improvement plan. Schools should also plan adequate professional development for beginning teachers and consider individual beginning teacher needs as part of the planning process. It is also important to provide professional development opportunities all throughout the year, not just clustered at the beginning and end of the year when heavy amounts of professional development are typically provided. Schools and districts could also partner with local colleges and universities to help with the licensure process and course work often required through the beginning teacher process.

Finally, administrators and leaders in education should reflect back on their days as a beginning teacher and consider their top concerns and needs, remembering that we are all human, seeking love, friendships and a place of belonging even in our work environments. Develop a family atmosphere and provide the needed supports and watch your beginning teachers flourish.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



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

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Kelsey Ballard](#)
CC: [Marjorie Ringle](#)
Date: 12/16/2019
Re: [UMCIRB 19-001717](#)
STUDYING THE EFFECTIVE USE OF MENTOR SUPPORTS FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS IN A RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 12/16/2019. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category # 1 & 2abc.

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

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

Document	Description
Appendix C(0.02)	Surveys and Questionnaires
Appendix D(0.02)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Appendix E(0.02)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Beginning Teacher Demographics(0.01)	Data Collection Sheet
Consent Form(0.01)	Consent Forms
Interview Protocol(0.02)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Kelsey Ballard - Dissertation 11-16-19(0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Mentor Teacher Demographics(0.01)	Data Collection Sheet

For research studies where a waiver of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(2)(ii) has been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

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

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

“STUDYING THE EFFECTIVE USE OF MENTOR SUPPORTS FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS IN A RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOL” Research Study Consent Form

You are being asked to take part in a research study regarding the effectiveness of the beginning teacher induction (support) program in your current school, specifically focusing on the role of mentors/mentees. I am asking you to take part because you meet the criteria for either a beginning teacher or a beginning teacher mentor. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to gain insight into effective practices for mentors and beginning teacher induction programs as they support beginning teachers. In order to take part in this study you must be a teacher in years one, two or three in your current role, or a mentor overseeing the work of a beginning teacher.

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study, I will conduct a series of surveys and interviews with you over the course of the next year. The surveys and interviews will include questions about your job as a teacher and mentor/mentee. The surveys and interviews will each take about 20 minutes to complete. With your permission, I would also like to audio-record the interviews.

Risks and benefits:

IRB standard minimal risk statement: "I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life."

The benefits to you are that as a result of your feedback, the current beginning teacher induction program will be altered, hopefully resulting in a more positive and supportive work environment for teachers and increased achievement for students.

Compensation: There is no compensation for your participation.

Your answers will be confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report that I make public I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a password-protected electronic file; only the researcher will have access to the records. If I audio-record the interview, I will destroy the audio records after it has been transcribed, which I anticipate will be within two months of its recording.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any question(s) that you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current or future relationship with your current employer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have questions: The researcher conducting this study is Kelsey Ballard. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Kelsey Ballard at ballardke18@students.ecu.edu or at (252) 446-2030. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 607-255-5138. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview audio-recorded.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of person obtaining consent Kelsey M. Ballard Date 9/4/19

Printed name of person obtaining consent Kelsey M. Ballard Date 9/4/19

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study.

APPENDIX C: SURVEY #1 FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS

Structured Survey Protocol Template #1 for Beginning Teachers

As you answer the following survey questions, please be sure not to share any demographic information, including your name, the school name, any other staff members' names or any other personal information which could identify any participants or the school.

Q1 What was your classification during the 2018-2019 school year?

- Pre-BT (1)
 - BT 1 (2)
 - BT 2 (3)
 - BT 3 (4)
-

Q2 Were you employed at West Edgecombe Middle School during the 2018-2019 school year?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
-

Q3 Were you employed with Edgecombe County Public Schools during the 2018-2019 school year?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
-

Q4 Have you ever received formal teacher preparation training?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: Q5 If Have you ever received formal teacher preparation training? = Yes
Skip To: Q7 If Have you ever received formal teacher preparation training? = No

Q5 In what state did you receive teacher preparation training?

Q6 Please indicate which of the following components were required as part of your teacher preparation training (select all that apply):

- Subject Matter Content (1)
 - Pedagogy (2)
 - Early Field Experience (3)
 - Student Teaching (4)
-

Q7 Please indicate which of the factors below most influenced your decision to work for your current division or school (select all that apply):

- Attractive pay and benefits (1)
 - Appeal of teaching assignment (2)
 - School/division had good working conditions (3)
 - Friends/former colleagues at this school (4)
 - Challenge of working in a hard-to-staff school (5)
 - Short commuting distance (6)
 - Social and cultural offerings of the community or a nearby city (7)
 - Opportunities for advancement (8)
 - Appeal of physical and natural surroundings (9)
 - Close to friends and family (10)
 - Close to home (11)
 - Too few job choices (12)
 - Other (13)
-

Q10 Did you have a beginning teacher mentor for the 2018-2019 school year?

- Yes (17)
- No (18)

Skip To: Q11 If Did you have a beginning teacher mentor for the 2018-2019 school year? = Yes
Skip To: Q8 If Did you have a beginning teacher mentor for the 2018-2019 school year? = No

Q11 Did your beginning teacher mentor teach the same grade or subject as you?

- Yes (4)
 - No (5)
-

Q8 Please rate the overall quality of the 2018-2019 Beginning Teacher Induction Program.

- Excellent (24)
 - Good (25)
 - Average (26)
 - Poor (27)
 - Terrible (28)
-

Q9 Please rate the quality of support you received from the 2018-2019 Beginning Teacher Induction Program.

- Excellent (23)
 - Good (24)
 - Average (25)
 - Poor (26)
 - Terrible (27)
-

Q12 To what extent did the 2018-2019 Beginning Teacher Induction Program help you feel more prepared to teach?

- A great deal (16)
 - A lot (17)
 - A moderate amount (18)
 - A little (19)
 - None at all (20)
-

Q13 To what extent did the 2018-2019 Beginning Teacher Induction Program help you feel more confident as a teacher?

- A great deal (11)
 - A lot (12)
 - A moderate amount (13)
 - A little (14)
 - None at all (15)
-

Q14 How adequate was the 2018-2019 Beginning Teacher Induction Program at providing you with the tools you needed to succeed as a teacher?

- Extremely adequate (18)
 - Somewhat adequate (19)
 - Neither adequate nor inadequate (20)
 - Somewhat inadequate (21)
 - Extremely inadequate (22)
-

Q15 Would you recommend the 2018-2019 Beginning Teacher Induction Program to others?

- Definitely yes (11)
 - Probably yes (12)
 - Might or might not (13)
 - Probably not (14)
 - Definitely not (15)
-

Q16 Please rate the support you received from the 2018-2019 administration team in regards to your work as a beginning teacher.

- Excellent (11)
 - Good (12)
 - Average (13)
 - Poor (14)
 - Terrible (15)
-

Q19 As you reflect on your 2018-2019 year teaching, how well-prepared did you feel to face the challenges that came your way?

- Very prepared (1)
 - Moderately prepared (2)
 - Neutral (3)
 - Moderately unprepared (4)
 - Very unprepared (5)
-

Q18 How would you evaluate the amount of time and emphasis given to each of the following elements as part of the beginning teacher induction program during the 2018-2019 school year?

	Far too much (20)	Moderately too much (21)	Slightly too much (22)	Neither too much nor too little (23)	Slightly too little (24)	Moderately too little (25)	Far too little (26)
Subject matter content (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pedagogy (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lesson Plan Writing (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exemplar Models (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Classroom management (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assessment creation (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data tracking (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q21 Please rate the helpfulness of the support you received from the following school personnel.

	Extremely satisfied (46)	Somewhat satisfied (47)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (48)	Somewhat dissatisfied (49)	Extremely dissatisfied (50)
Colleague (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mentor (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grade Chair (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School Specialist/Coach (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assistant Principal (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Principal (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Office Staff (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW #1 FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS

Structured Interview Protocol Template #1 for Beginning Teachers

Title of study: Studying the Effective Use of Mentor Supports for Beginning Teachers in a Rural Middle School

Date & Time of Interview: Thursday, December 12, 2019, 4:00pm-4:30pm

Location: Rural Middle School, Learning Commons

Interviewer: Kelsey Ballard

Interviewee: Anonymous Beginning Teacher

Position /Title of Interviewee: Beginning Teacher

Briefly describe the project to the interviewee.

Demographic information of interviewee: The interviewee is a beginning teacher, meaning a teacher in year 1-3 of teaching.

Questions to be asked listed fully and in order:

At the beginning of the recording, the interviewer will read the following statement to the interviewee: "Please be sure not to share any demographic information, including your name, the school name, any other staff members' names or any other personal information which could identify any participants or the school." This statement will also be read every 10 minutes during the interview. A timer will be used to alert the interviewer when to re-read this statement.

1. What element of the beginning teacher induction program helped you the most?
2. If you could change one thing about last school year, what would it be?
3. In what ways did you feel supported last school year?
4. In what ways did you not feel supported last school year?
5. Tell me about the collaboration you had with other teachers last year.
6. How often did you reflect as an educator last school year?
7. Do you know what the goals of the school were last year?
8. What were your goals as a teacher last school year?
9. Do you feel that you grew as a teacher last year? How so?
10. What types/kinds of professional development (PD) did you receive last year? Which was the most beneficial?
11. Did you get any feedback from your mentor last year? If so, what is helpful? Did you put the feedback to use? If so, how quickly?
12. Did you get any feedback from your Principal/Assistant Principal last year? If so, was it helpful? Did you put the feedback to use? If so, how quickly?

13. What is missing from the current beginning teacher induction program?
14. Would you recommend teaching as a career to others?
15. How would you describe your job satisfaction?

Record responses, make notes of key point from each response below:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

**Thank the interviewee for their participation.
Assure them that their responses will be kept confidential.**

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW #2 FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS

Structured Interview Protocol Template #2 for Beginning Teachers

Title of study: Studying the Effective Use of Mentor Supports for Beginning Teachers in a Rural Middle School

Date & Time of Interview: Thursday, June 11, 2020, 4:00pm-4:30pm

Location: Rural Middle School, Learning Commons

Interviewer: Kelsey Ballard

Interviewee: Anonymous Beginning Teacher

Position /Title of Interviewee: Beginning Teacher

Briefly describe the project to the interviewee.

Demographic information of interviewee: The interviewee is a beginning teacher, meaning a teacher in year 1-3 of teaching.

Questions to be asked listed fully and in order:

At the beginning of the recording, the interviewer will read the following statement to the interviewee: "Please be sure not to share any demographic information, including your name, the school name, any other staff members' names or any other personal information which could identify any participants or the school." This statement will also be read every 10 minutes during the interview. A timer will be used to alert the interviewer when to re-read this statement.

1. What element of the beginning teacher induction program helped you the most?
2. Did you find the new elements of the beginning teacher induction program revamping helpful? If so, how and in what ways? What element of the beginning teacher induction program revamping was most helpful?
3. Did you feel more supported as a beginning teacher during semester 1 or semester 2? What do you attribute this to?
4. What could be done to better support you as a beginning teacher?
5. Do you feel the collaboration with other teachers is beneficial? Could it be improved in any way? If so, how?
6. Did you practice reflecting this school year? When and how often?
7. Did you have personal goals this school year? If so, what were they and did you meet them?
8. Do you know what the school goals were for this year? Were they met?
9. Do you feel that you grew as a teacher this year? If so, when did the most growth occur? What do you attribute it to?

10. What types/kinds of professional development (PD) did you receive this year? Which was the most beneficial?
11. Did you get any feedback from your mentor this year? If so, what is helpful? Did you put the feedback to use? If so, how quickly?
12. Did you get any feedback from your Principal/Assistant Principal last year? If so, was it helpful? Did you put the feedback to use? If so, how quickly?
13. What is missing from the current beginning teacher induction program?
14. Would you recommend teaching as a career to others?
15. How would you describe your job satisfaction and what contributed to it?

Record responses, make notes of key point from each response below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.

**Thank the interviewee for their participation.
Assure them that their responses will be kept confidential.**

APPENDIX F: REVISED BEGINNING TEACHER LOG

Mentor Log for Beginning Teachers 2019-2020

Beginning Teacher: _____
 School: _____

Month: _____
 Mentor: _____

BT Status: 1 2 3

Date/Time	Focus and/or Collaborate (select one each week to discuss)	Action Steps
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesson Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Data Tracking <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional Best Practice <input type="checkbox"/> Welfare Check In Details:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesson Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Data Tracking <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional Best Practice <input type="checkbox"/> Welfare Check In Details:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesson Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Data Tracking <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional Best Practice <input type="checkbox"/> Welfare Check In Details:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesson Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Data Tracking <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional Best Practice <input type="checkbox"/> Welfare Check In Details:	

Mentor's Comments

Mentor's Signature _____ Date_____

Beginning Teacher's Reflection

Question 1 : This month, has your classroom management included mostly positive narration or negative narration? What is one thing you can do differently this upcoming week to improve your classroom management?

Question 2: Have you been diligent in your lesson preparation this month? What is one improvement you can make in your lesson preparation this upcoming week to increase the learning in your classroom?

Beginning Teacher's Signature_____ Date_____

