

MENTORING: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY EXAMINING HOW THE  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MENTOR AND MENTEE BECOMES  
MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL

by

David Richard Martin

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education

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## **ABSTRACT**

This grounded theory qualitative study examined the mentee/mentor relationship between five first year teachers and their five assigned mentors in a school district in Central Florida. To generate a model that seeks to explain how and why a mentee/mentor relationship changes and evolves from that of a single directional stream of information to that of a bidirectional stream which benefits the professional development of both parties, the grounded theory approach was utilized. Three forms of data were collected: interviews, focus groups, and participant journaling. This data along with artifacts and documents describing the school setting and the use of mentors to support first year teachers allowed for a detailed understanding of what needs to be in place to promote successful relationships among first year teachers and their assigned mentors.

The research revealed that in order for the relationship to provide professional growth benefits to both parties a number of factors must be present. The participants must commit to the mentoring process, invest sufficient time for meetings and activities, and become comfortable with each other through honest, respectful and open interactions. It is imperative that school administration thoughtfully pair participants and provide time to facilitate the relationship.

Descriptors: mentoring, professional development, teacher induction, differentiation, novice teacher, grounded theory

## **DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my mother, Nancy Louise Martin. She was my hero and inspiration. As a child, I saw her struggle to ensure that I was able to enjoy my childhood and be afforded all of the opportunities that had eluded her growing up. Her truly selfless acts of kindness and compassion not only had a positive effect on me, but she touched the lives of so many through her tireless desire to help others. She instilled in me my Christian beliefs and taught me the power of prayer. I learned from her that in order to achieve great things, I must be willing to work hard. She had high standards and insisted I pursued my education. She was always supportive, even in difficult times. Even though she passed away in 2007, she is with me every day, encouraging me to do my best and helping to pick me up when I fall. She was and still is an inspiration in my life to do what is right and good.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Background**

Attrition among America's teachers is at an all-time high. Over the last 15 years, the numbers of teachers leaving the profession has risen by 50% (NCTAF, 2008). The attrition rate among teachers is approximately 16.8%, but increases dramatically when examining rates among new teachers (NCTAF, 2008). It is estimated that within the first five years of teaching, 30% to 50% of teachers leave the profession (Abdallah, 2009; Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; NCTAF, 2008). This large turnover rate can be attributed to the many changes the profession has seen in the past 20 years, especially since the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also known as No Child Left Behind, NCLB) in 2001, which was enacted into law in 2002 (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008). Increased pressure has been placed on teachers, and accountability measures are at an unprecedented level. High stakes testing, changing curriculum standards, and difficult student populations create stressors for new teachers that drive many away from the profession (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008).

If school administrators are to curb this trend of flight from the profession, and are to promote retention among the ranks of new educators, it is critical that proper support and professional development are given to beginning teachers. These new teachers must be provided with a solid foundation of instructional and curricular expertise so that they may adequately address the needs of the learners they serve. Having quality teachers in the classroom is one of the best indicators for student success (Theobald & Michael, 2002). If proper support is not provided to teachers, they may become frustrated and leave the profession without reaching their true teaching potential (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). The turnover rate in teaching is high when compared to other professions, but affects new teachers even more so than their more seasoned, veteran counterparts (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). The effect of this high turnover rate among new teachers ultimately creates a shortage of veteran, experienced teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). This not only

generates a shortage of quality teachers, it leads to a considerable financial burden on already cash-stricken schools, costing districts approximately US\$ 2.2 billion each year to replace those who have left the profession (Abdallah, 2009).

With the turnover rate so high among teachers in their first five years of the profession, school systems must focus on ensuring that these novice teachers have the support they need to promote success in the classroom. Many of those that leave the teaching profession state that a lack of support was a major contributing factor to their decision (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). As a means of addressing the problem of teachers leaving the profession within the first several years of their career, most districts provide an induction program as a means of support (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). These programs are designed to provide support structures for new teachers and help them successfully transition to their teaching career (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2009). During the past 20 years, mentoring has become an important part of teacher-induction programs across the country (Greiman, Torres, Burris, & Kitchel, 2007).

As a component of a comprehensive teacher-induction program, mentoring helps address some of the key features identified as essential elements to quality professional development: sufficient time to develop skills, the promotion of active learning activities, a focus on course content, and the provision of coherence in terms of the overall professional development activity (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Penuel, Fishman, Gallagher, & Yamguchi, 2007). Research has shown that effective professional development allows participants sufficient time to address the needs of the teacher as a learner and to develop the skills necessary to be successful as a classroom practitioner (Garet et al., 2001; Penuel et al., 2007). Induction programs and their mentoring components typically last between one and three years, providing sustained engagement that allows time for the classroom teacher to become a more confident and capable practitioner (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Effective professional development also takes into account the role of forming a collegial relationship and working collectively toward professional development goals (Abdallah, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Penuel et al., 2007). This collegial

relationship helps to assist in promoting active learning activities such as classroom observations by both mentors and mentees (Penuel et al., 2007). The practice of mentoring addresses these characteristics, and its support structure allows the mentee to obtain specific, differentiated support from their mentor (Schwille, 2008). This also provides the coherence needed to provide consistent support to the new teacher (Penuel et al., 2007).

Much of the research concerning mentoring in the teaching profession has concentrated on its overall place in new teacher-induction programs (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Most of the research focuses on the effects of the mentoring relationship for the new teacher and neglects the examination of the benefits that the experienced mentor teacher receives (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). There has also been little research conducted on how the relationship between the mentor and mentee evolves. Understanding the evolution of this relationship and the theory behind it would be beneficial in the training and cultivation of quality mentors and the relationships they spawn (Schwille, 2008).

### **Correlation of the Roles of School Administrator and Researcher**

From a pragmatic educational viewpoint, a school administrator must frame the relationship to the subject matter of the study as practical and necessary to understand the development of the mentor–mentee relationship in an educational setting. Duties as a school administrator include the responsibility of recruiting and retaining quality educators. In today’s educational climate with limited funding and high attrition among new teachers, retention can be a difficult task for an administrator. The professional development of these teachers is an essential element to ensure the retention of new teachers, and that effective teaching and learning is taking place. The relationship between this study and the role of a school-level administrator is to help the administrator understand how collaborative learning functions at the adult level—specifically, how the relationships between the adult participants form and change over time. It is through a constructivist lens that the researcher views this process of adults learning from one another.

A school administrator must maintain a vision and not lose sight of the struggles faced by

classroom teachers, especially those who are in the infancy of their career. The following assumptions were made by the building-level administrator whose role in this study was the researcher: (a) teachers bring to the field of education varied experience and backgrounds that can affect their instructional style and proficiency; b) teacher mentors have various motivating factors that influence their decision to serve as mentors; c) the mentors have varied experience and this affects the means by which they mentor their mentee; d) relationships between individuals evolve differently based on interests, experience, and personalities; and e) both the new teachers and their mentors want to promote good instruction in the classroom. These assumptions should not hinder the research, but should serve as filters to assist in deciphering the data collected.

### **Problem Statement**

The lack of a theoretical foundation to explain the process of mentoring relationships creates a need for further study (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Greiman, Torres, Burris, & Kitchel, 2007; Schwille, 2008). Understanding this relationship and how it evolves is essential in creating mentoring assignments, planning, and program design. For the purpose of this study, the two parties are the mentees, who consist of first-year K-12 teachers, and their mentors, who are experienced K-12 educators with at least three years of teaching experience.

The practice of mentoring can look very different at the various human developmental stages. The practice of mentoring teachers requires a theoretical foundation anchored in the understanding of how adults learn (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011) and mutually model the behavior of one another (Bandura, 1977).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to generate a model to explain the relationship that emerges between first-year teachers and their assigned mentors in a suburban school district in Central Florida from that of a one-way exchange of information to a sharing of ideas where both the mentor and mentee benefit from the relationship. The process of mentoring is the “construction of knowledge guided by a knowledgeable teacher who scaffolds the learning of another until this

learning is internalized” (Schwille, 2008, p. 141). The mentoring relationship requires a great deal of emotional investment by both parties (Barrera et al., 2010). Understanding how this emotional investment evolves and leads into a sharing of information is the central theme of this study.

### **Research Questions**

The over-arching question is how do first-year, K-12 teachers and their assigned mentors move their relationship from one in which the novice educator only receives advice and guidance from the veteran teacher to a relationship in which there is an exchange of ideas that benefits the practice of both parties? Referring to the role of mentoring in a teacher-induction program (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Conway, 2006; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), the following sub-questions helped to guide this study:

1. What role does mentoring play in the professional development of a first-year teacher?
2. What are key components to the mentee–mentor relationship?
3. What factors need to be present for the mentee–mentor relationship to move from a single directional to a bidirectional exchange of information that benefits the practice of both parties?

These questions raise issues around not only the development of the mentee, but of the mentor as well. Together, how do these two educators work together for the differentiated development of each other (Garet et al., 2001; Penuel et al., 2007)?

### **Significance of the Study**

Quality mentoring relationships and sharing of information are two foundations to better teaching and increased professional maturity for the new teacher. The new teacher gains a foundation of instructional practice from their mentor that goes far beyond the pedagogy they learned in their teacher preparation program (Penuel et al., 2007). The mentor can help the new teacher move from the theory of teaching to the practice, allowing the new teacher greater insight

into lesson delivery, instructional technique, and the all-important classroom management (Penuel et al., 2007).

The mentor–mentee relationship also provides a means for the mentoring teacher to remain current and build their own instructional skills through assisting new teachers (Barrera et al., 2010). The mentoring process is not only for the benefit of the new teacher; through the process, the experienced teacher also grows professionally through this exchange of knowledge (Barrera et al., 2010). The mentor is able to observe and learn about new ways of presenting content, learn about new instructional technologies, and stay current regarding the latest educational research and trends (Barrera et al., 2010).

Mentoring is a large part of many teacher-induction programs across the United States (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Greiman et al., 2007). With the prominence of mentoring programs within teacher induction, it is important to fully understand the relationship dynamics between mentors and mentees. Having a theoretical framework of how this relationship evolves is significant in developing the programming that accompanies the mentoring component, particularly when looking at pairing mentors and mentees (Grieman et al., 2007).

The Florida Department of Education eliminated the requirement for school districts to provide a formal induction program for new teachers in 1997 (Milton, Curva, Kolbe, Milton, & Milton, 2009). Although the requirement for districts to provide a formal induction program was eliminated, most school districts in the state still provide some form of formal induction program (Milton et al., 2009). According to Milton et al. (2009), 80% of new teachers who participated in a new teacher-induction program reported that they were assigned a mentor, with 85% reporting that this component was “somewhat” to “very” important. With such a large number of teachers reporting that the mentoring component was important, it is critical that schools and districts understand how the relationship between mentors and mentees develop, and that they have a framework in place for promoting the best possible outcomes. Understanding the dynamics of the mentor and mentee relationship and how it evolves would assist these local education agencies in

developing effective programs to help support new teachers. Strong mentoring programs allow for greater retention of teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). This retention leads to greater monetary savings for districts, and increased academic performance for students (Abdallah, 2008).

### **Delimitations**

The study only examined the relationships between first-year teachers and their assigned mentors. While other mentor–mentee relationships may exist within the school, only first-year teachers and their assigned mentors will be considered for participation within the study. The most common example of mentor–mentee relationships that will be excluded includes teachers who have moved beyond their first year being assigned a mentor because of performance deficiencies. The school also provides mentors to experienced teachers that are new to the building. Although new to the school, these teachers are not in their first year of service and will be excluded from this study.

The research did not include any information on mentee–mentor relationships that were not assigned by the school or district. The researcher acknowledges that informal mentoring relationships may exist within the school, but these were not included within this study. This included any relationship that a first-year teacher may consider as mentoring if it included anyone not assigned to mentor them by the school administration. An assigned mentor was defined as a mentor who is formally assigned to a first-year teacher by the school or district.

Geographically, the study was confined to a high school located in Central Florida. This location was selected because of its familiarity to the researcher and its established use of mentors as a means of primary support to new teachers. This research site also historically had a significant number of new teachers each year, thus providing a suitable number of possible study participants.

All participants were licensed by the state of Florida as professional educators. The new teachers were either on a three-year temporary or five-year renewable teaching certificate. All mentors held five-year renewable certificates (Florida Department of Education, 2012).

### **Research Plan**

This qualitative study utilized a grounded theory approach. With the goal of explaining how



the mentee–mentor relationship develops over time and understanding why this takes place, a grounded theory approach was most appropriate. The study detailed the actions and interactions of the participants as they worked closely together throughout one school year (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Utilizing the first-hand interactions of the mentors and mentees studied will allow a theory to develop based on those who have experienced the process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The purpose of the study is to explain how the mentee–mentor relationship changes and evolves over an academic year. The research will serve to generate a model of how positive educational relationships develop that can be transferred to other similar situations. Through comparisons of the five mentee–mentor pairs, commonalities emerged that explained the means through which the relationship was nurtured (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse, Stern, Corbin, Bowers, Charmaz, & Clark, 2009). Through comparative analysis, a model of educational mentoring practices was developed (Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

As this study involved adult learners, the lenses for this study were adult learning theory and andragogy (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles et al., 2011). Understanding the key concepts of how adults learn is critical when examining the relationship between mentors and mentees. How the facilitator sets the tone and creates the learning environment will have a large impact on the success of the relationship (Knowles et al., 2011).

This study examined the participants' interactions through participant interviews and first-person accounts in participant journals. The participants consisted of five separate pairs. These pairs were determined by the school administration. Within each pair, one participant was a first-year teacher (mentee) and the other participant was the new teacher's assigned mentor. The mentor was an experienced teacher with at least three years of teaching experience.

The primary sources for the data collected through direct interaction with the study participants were interviews, focus groups, and participant journaling. A representative of the

school's administration was also interviewed so that the researcher could understand the school's perception of the effectiveness of the mentoring program, and how they determine mentee–mentor pairings. All research began after permission was obtained through the research site's administration and the application to Liberty University's Institutional Review Board was approved.

During the 2012–2013 school year, each study participant was interviewed separately three times. The first interview was held during the first semester of the school year. The second interview was held directly after the first semester, marking the half-way point of the school year. The third and final interview was held in the final quarter of the second semester, nearing the end of the school year.

Two focus groups were held. These focus groups were separated into new teachers and experienced mentors. They were held separately so that members could share among each other their experiences in their respective roles within the mentee–mentor relationship. These focus groups were held separately to promote candidness among the participants, and to allow them to be comfortable in sharing their thoughts and feelings with other participants in their same role as a mentor or mentee.

Each participant will keep a journal throughout the school year. This will be provided to the researcher periodically in digital format. The researcher will provide prompts to spur on thought, but the participants will be allowed to record any aspect of the mentee–mentor relationship that they would like to discuss.

Finally, artifacts were collected from the school's administration and website to provide evidence of or the lack of formal programming to support the mentee–mentor relationship. These artifacts included items such as program protocols, administrative directives, policy, and procedures related to the new teacher-mentoring program, state policies, and any other documentation that could provide a better understanding of the structure of the mentoring program.

The data was carefully coded and analyzed utilizing axial, open, and selective coding to determine the central phenomenon associated with the relationships (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse et al., 2009). Through the coding process, central themes were identified and correlations made between the mentoring pairs (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse et al., 2009). It will also be important to understand the differences extracted from the data gathered to gain a full understanding of the dynamics within each set of mentee–mentor pairs. Identifying the differences and developing an understanding of why the relationships developed differently is essential to providing a better framework for schools and districts to utilize in pairing mentors with new teachers (Barrera et al., 2010).

Utilizing the grounded theory approach, an understanding was achieved of how the mentee–mentor relationship emerged as an important part of the new teacher-induction process. Benefits for both the mentee and mentor were delineated and examined in order to identify the commonalities between pairs, and to determine the processes involved within the evolution of the mentor and mentee relationship. This understanding will allow school districts to improve the mentoring processes and help to formalize the procedure.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The teaching profession has changed much over the past 20 years (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008). Students learn differently and teachers require more support than ever before to ensure they are successful in the classroom (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008). The support begins at teacher induction, and a primary component of many teacher-induction programs is the mentoring provided to new educators by those who are experienced in the profession (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Griffin, 2010; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Understanding the relationship between the mentor teachers and their mentees is crucial to increase professional growth opportunities for both professionals involved in the process. Part of this understanding comes through defining roles and understanding how the relationship develops over time (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). By having these understandings, school leadership can better shape successful mentoring programs and improve upon the teacher-induction process.

This review of the literature focuses on several key areas of teacher development and mentoring (teacher attrition, professional development, teacher induction, the role of mentoring within teacher-induction programs, the qualities of a successful mentor, and the benefits of mentoring for the mentor). In an effort to understand why teacher-induction and mentoring programs are important, we must first examine why it is important to provide support, especially to new teachers. With an attrition rate of over 30% among teachers in their first five years in the profession, providing needed support is critical (Abdallah, 2009; Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Next, the teacher-induction programs are an integrated part of the overall professional development of teachers, so it is important to understand the elements of effective professional development and the role it plays in a teacher's career (Desimone, 2009). Looking at the structure of teacher-induction programs and the role mentoring plays within them will emphasize their importance in the overall process. The development of the relationship between mentors and mentees in a teacher-induction program is the focus of this study, so it is important to

have a foundational knowledge of mentoring relationships and their characteristics. An examination must be made of what characteristics need to be present to ensure that a new teacher has a quality mentor. Finally, an examination must not only include how mentoring benefits the new teacher, but must also look at the benefits for the mentor, and how they improve their practice through the act of mentoring a new teacher. In order to recruit and retain quality mentors, those that choose to support new teachers need to realize the way in which their professional practice will benefit from their mentoring role.

### **Theoretical Framework**

As this study concerns the relationship between education professionals and ensuring that the mentoring programs are designed to provide learning opportunities for both parties involved, it is imperative to understand the characteristics of adult learners (Barrera et al., 2010). The theory that will guide this study is andragogy (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011). Most educators are familiar with the term pedagogy, which is simply defined as the “art and science of helping children learn.” Andragogy is the “art and science of helping adults learn” (Merriam, 2001, p. 5).

The central theorist associated with andragogy is Malcom Knowles. Knowles originally associated four key assumptions with his idea of andragogy (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011). Those assumptions are a) adult learners have a self-concept, and are responsible for decisions concerning their own lives; b) adults bring varied experiences both in quality and quantity, having consequences on their education; c) adults have a readiness to learn based on need and applicability to real-life situations; and d) adults have an orientation as learners who are typically driven by tasks or problems (Knowles et al., 2011). These assumptions were increased to six in more recent years to include the need to know, and motivation (Knowles et al., 2011). Adult learners must understand why they need to know information, which creates a motivation to learn (Knowles et al., 2011).

When examining the six assumptions associated with andragogy, there are some key understandings that are critical to recognize when applying this theoretical framework to the study of new teachers and their assigned mentors. First, the idea of self-concept, according to the

literature, is not always transferred to the educational setting (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles et al., 2011). Although Knowles believes that the definition of adulthood in a psychological sense is when a person perceives themselves as self-directing, he fails to see a full transfer of this in the educational setting (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles et al., 2011). “The task of the facilitator of learning, therefore, is to create an educational program and setting in which adult students can develop their latent self-directed learning skills” (Brookfield, 1986, p. 92). The facilitator for the purpose of this study refers to the mentor assigned to the new teacher.

From his six assumptions, it can also be said the Knowles and colleagues view the process of adult learning as a collaborative venture between the learner and facilitator: “Engaging adults as collaborative partners for learning satisfies the need to know as well as appeals to their self-concept as independent learners” (Knowles et al., 2011, p. 181). The mutual planning of activities is seen as a critical component in the relationship between the facilitator and learner (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles et al., 2011).

The mentoring component of a new teacher’s professional development is a job-embedded exercise in learning because of the elements of observation with feedback, the modeling of instructional strategies, and advisement by the mentoring teacher (Desimone, 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Nahal, 2010; Penuel et al., 2007). This relates directly to the idea that an adult learner must understand the applicability to real-life situations (Knowles et al., 2011). This mentoring relationship is meant to assist the new teacher in dealing with real-life situations they may encounter in the classroom (Desimone, 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Nahal, 2010; Penuel et al., 2007). The mentor may also serve as a catalyst for why it is important to know certain information, and for how to apply this information in the classroom (Knowles et al., 2011).

When examining the role of the facilitator in the adult learning process and andragogy, the role can differ vastly from that as a classroom instructor. In the K-12 setting, most teachers who serve as mentors are used to refining their pedagogy and assisting children to learn. An experienced teacher must switch gears when mentoring a novice educator because his/her needs are different

from the needs of K-12 students. The mentor must provide a physical and psychological climate that promotes adult learning (Brookfield, 1986). Understanding the six assumptions associated with andragogy and using this lens to shape the learning activity is critical to successful cultivation of the mentee–mentor relationship. Through the lens of andragogy, the mentee–mentor relationship must be collaborative in nature in order to facilitate learning (Brookfield, 1986). Collaboration is critical to the success of a mentee–mentor relationship, and an important aspect of understanding how the relationship changes from a single stream of information to adults learning from one another. It is through this lens that this study approaches the research regarding the mentee–mentor relationship.

The role of a learner’s experience influences the means through which learning takes place (Knowles et al., 2011). When attempting to mentor and educate an adult, it is critical to remember that the learners come with more experiences that vary in depth and quality (Knowles et al., 2011). Serving as a mentor to an adult learner requires greater emphasis on an individualized approach as it pertains to teaching and learning strategies (Knowles et al., 2011).

Andragogy, in practice, allows for a solid framework to build upon for an experienced teacher to mentor a new teacher. Some assumptions and ideas presented in this theoretical framework allow adult learners to take part in their own plan for learning while promoting collaboration between the mentor and mentee (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles et al., 2011). According to Brookfield (1986), facilitators (mentors) must involve learners (mentees) in “mutual planning methods and curricular directions” (p. 102). Mentors must also allow the learner to take part in diagnosing their own needs, creating their own learning objectives, identifying the required resources, developing plans for execution, and creating the means through which to evaluate their progress collaboratively (Brookfield, 1986). This ability to take part in planning their own map for learning relates directly to Knowles’ ideas that adults have a self-concept, are responsible for decisions in their own lives, and have a readiness to learn based on applicability to real-life situations (Knowles et al., 2011). The application of these real-life situations to this study is the

new teacher's experience as a classroom teacher and the mentor's responsibility in terms of them helping to support this.

### **Teacher Attrition**

When examining the relationships between novice teachers and their mentors, it is important to understand a major problem within the teacher profession that has led to a greater need for better teacher induction: teacher attrition. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) estimates that 157,000 teachers leave the profession each year with another 232,000 educators changing to higher performing, more desirable schools. The problem of teacher attrition is plaguing school districts across the nation, having negative effects on the financial resources of school districts, and the success of the students they serve (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008).

Teacher attrition is a costly complication for school districts not only financially, but also in terms of its effects on the overall educational experience for students. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2007) estimates the financial impact on school districts across the country at over US\$ 7 billion a year. In the same study, it was estimated that teacher turnover cost the Chicago Public School System alone an average of US\$ 86 million per annum. This is an average cost of US\$ 15,325 for each teacher who leaves the district (Waterman & He, 2011). The number of teachers leaving the profession has increased dramatically in the last 20 years. Based on its 2004–2005 Teacher Follow-up Survey, the U.S. Department of Education reported that teacher attrition had grown by 50% in the 15 years prior to the study. The national average for teacher attrition had grown to 16.8%, with over 20% in some urban districts. In some cases, these teacher dropout rates are higher than the student dropout rate (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). During the 2007–2008 school year, of the 3.38 million school teachers working in public schools, 8% left the profession and 7.6% moved to other schools (Waterman & He, 2011). That is a 15.6% shift in teachers that the school systems had to contend with in that one year.

Although the financial burden is very high for districts when they are unable to retain teachers, there is a high overall cost to the educational experience for students. Teacher attrition



can lead to a shortage of qualified, experienced teachers in the classroom. Teacher quality is a very important component to the overall success of schools (Theobold & Michael, 2002). Quality teachers can have an effect on a school's bottom line as it pertains to student achievement. Having quality teachers in the classroom has been shown to produce up to a 7% positive difference in standardized test scores, and in this age of accountability, this is significant (Theobold & Michael, 2002). Within the hierarchy of a school setting, it is often the less experienced teacher who receives the lower performing students, who typically need the help of more experienced educators (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Providing new teachers with a strong support structure that includes mentoring can better prepare them to survive the "sink or swim" period that many believe occurs during the first years of a teacher's career (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Since teacher attrition is costly to districts and detrimental to student achievement, why is such a high level of attrition taking place among new teachers? Teacher attrition can be attributed to experience and training (Hallam, Chou, Hite, & Hite, 2012). Other factors include age, experience, and qualifications (Hallam et al., 2012). Many teachers that graduate from teacher preparation programs have a theoretical knowledge of education and pedagogy, but lack the knowledge of the realities of a classroom, or the practical application of the skills taught in their programs (Nahal, 2010).

Teachers that have more experience are less likely to leave the profession, but this in itself poses the question: If teachers leave the profession early, then how do they gain the experience needed to remain in the profession? Like many professions, teachers have a very large learning curve when they begin instructing in a classroom setting (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). They often lack the preparation needed to start teaching a classroom full of students due to a variety of circumstances. Due to funding cycles and shifting enrollments, teachers may be hired late, shortly before or after the start of the school year, hindering the new teacher in terms of their ability to set up their room, or to pre-plan for instruction (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Many that have freshly completed a preservice program may have a false sense of what the realities of teaching are, and in

a career where many transition from other professions through alternative certification means, they may have had no perception of what being a classroom teacher was like (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). New teachers also tend to be placed in difficult situations. Due to the idea of seniority, either formally or informally, teachers are often forced to accept teaching assignments in less desirable schools, and teach a more difficult and challenging student population (Brown & Schainker, 2008).

It is apparent that teacher attrition is expensive and has an effect on student achievement. How does mentoring have an effect on teacher attrition? Many teachers who leave the profession after a few years attribute lack of support as a major factor influencing their decision (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reported its findings from a 2008–2009 survey on teacher attrition and mobility. This survey showed that 40.8% of public school teachers who switched from teaching to other careers stated that they had more opportunities to learn from colleagues in their current profession (NCES, 2010). Those surveys suggest that there is the desire for teachers to learn from each other. Mentoring is a component of this collaborative learning process that is part of the over-arching professional development of teachers (Penuel, Fishman, Gallagher, & Yamaguchi, 2007).

### **Professional Development**

Most professionals, and especially those in education, have a desire to continue learning (Webster-Wright, 2009). It is important that school districts provide a foundation for this learning to take place. Having successful, meaningful professional development activities in place is crucial to teacher success and retention (Desimone, 2009; Penuel et al., 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009). Feeling underprepared for the rigors of teaching is a primary reason why many leave the profession (NCES, 2007; NCES, 2010).

Professional development serves several key functions in the development of a novice teacher. Professional development provides a means to learn skills that were not acquired during teacher preparation (Nahal, 2010). Quality professional development provides new teachers with a variety of scenarios that they may face in their daily lives in the classrooms. The development

would provide them with possible answers to the various scenarios, and would allow the participant to explore how they could deal with issues as they arise (Desimone, 2009; Nahal, 2010; Penuel et al., 2007).

Teachers find themselves teaching in isolation. Professional development provides opportunities for educators to work together (Nahal, 2010). Collegiality is a key component to successful professional development programs. In order for teachers to learn from one another, an environment of collegiality and caring must exist (Bieler, 2012; Nahal, 2010). Collegiality breeds collaboration, which is the key to the success of many new teachers (Bieler, 2012). Mentoring programs allow teachers to move from a state of isolation to collaboration, providing opportunities for both new and veteran teachers to learn from one another (Bieler, 2012).

Collaborative learning is a process that many teachers use as pedagogy within their classrooms. Collaboration in learning is not only meant to be a student activity. Many teaching professionals can benefit from collegiality in their profession (Abdullah, 2009). Trends in professional development have leaned toward collaborative learning within a framework of mentoring and professional learning communities (Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). Although there is a distinction between andragogy and pedagogy (Knowles et al., 2011), learning from peers is an effective way to transfer knowledge. Mentoring and working closely with peers can be an effective vehicle for this transfer of knowledge to take place (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Mentoring is an important component when discussing the overall professional development of a teacher. Mentoring as a component of the teacher-induction phase of professional development is one of the primary means of providing enrichment to novice teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

### **Teacher Induction**

The movement to implement and enhance teacher-induction programs is a response to the need to lower teacher attrition rates, especially in the early stages of a teacher's career (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Teacher-induction programs, most of which include a mentoring component, are many school administrations' answer to the perceived need to support new teachers (Ingersoll &

Strong, 2011).

Many in the teaching profession contend that education programs do not provide an adequate knowledge base for teachers to be successful practitioners. It is argued that new teachers typically lack the requisite knowledge required to be successful in the classroom, and it is this lack of knowledge that leads to difficulties in the classroom that attributes to low retention rates (Freemyer, Townsend, Freemyer, & Baldwin, 2010). Further, it is believed by many that this practitioner knowledge can only be gained on the job (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ganser, 2002; Gold, 1999; Hegstad, 1999). Induction programs are meant to support and enrich this on-the-job training for new teachers (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Griffin, 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Induction programs provide a link between the new teacher's preparation program, and the practice of teaching and meeting the learning needs of their district in those first few years of teaching (Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

Most new teachers, over 90%, participate in some type of formal teacher-induction program (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Ingersoll, 2012). Much of this increase occurred during the 1990s with only 51% of new teachers reporting participation in an induction plan during the 1990–1991 school year and 79% reporting participation during the 1999–2000 academic year (Ingersoll, 2012). The largest increase in the participation occurred in the six years between 1993 and 1994 and 1999 and 2000, surging from 52% to 79% of new teachers reporting participation in a teacher-induction program (Ingersoll, 2012).

With such a high number of participants and districts relying heavily on these programs to prepare their teachers for the stresses of teaching, it is important to understand what elements help to make induction programs successful. There tends to be a lack of clarity as to what a teacher-induction program should look like (Andrew, Peter, & Fleischman, 2005). Although many states require induction programs for new teachers, these may vary in length and quality (Andrew et al., 2005). Wood and Stanulis (2009) studied induction programs over a 30-year period, from 1977 to 2006. They defined a quality teacher-induction program as “the multi-faceted process of teacher

development and novice teachers' continued learning-to-teach through an organized professional development program of educative mentor support and formative assessment" (p. 3). Wood and Stanulis (2009) see three focuses in teacher-induction programs: a transitional phase for teachers, a socialization process, and comprehensive and intensive support systems. This comprehensive support system includes a formative assessment component for novice teachers (Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

In another study, Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) defined teacher induction as "a systematic process embedded in a healthy school climate that meets new teachers' personal and professional needs" (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Personal needs are those of a psychological nature including self-esteem, self-reliance, and self-efficacy (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Professional needs encompass the technical aspect of teaching such as instruction, professional development, and reflections on the practice of teaching (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010).

Requirements for teacher-induction programs vary across districts and states. Several states such as California, Connecticut, and Kentucky require teachers to participate in an induction program that is tied to their certification as a teacher (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Kentucky Department of Education, 2011). All three programs are multi-year programs, and include both mentoring and portfolio components (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Kentucky Department of Education, 2011). Carver and Feiman-Nemser (2009) also discuss a program from the city schools of Cincinnati that is union driven. Mentoring is a key component in this program, along with many other components that can be observed in the literature (Desimone, 2009; Griffin, 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Penuel et al., 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009). The state of Florida, where the research site for this study is located, does not require new teachers to participate in a teacher-induction program and receive mentoring assistance (Milton et al., 2009). Though it is not a requirement, most districts in the state do provide an induction program (Milton et al., 2009).

Whether an induction program is required by a state or is optional, many share a common set of goals. When examining many teacher-induction programs over time, Wood and Stanulis

(2009) concluded the key goals for teacher-induction programs were an increase in the retention rate of new teachers; ensuring a new teacher's personal and professional welfare; improving a new teacher's teaching skills; and through improving the teacher, you can improve student performance, and satisfy certification requirements. The study discusses mentoring as a component of a teacher-induction program and emphasizes the importance of effectively selecting mentors, providing incentives to mentors, examining the way in which mentors are matched with new teachers, mentor preparation, and the means through which mentors provide services to new teachers (Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

### **Mentoring and Teacher Induction**

There are two schools of thought regarding mentoring programs as a part of teacher induction. Most states and districts have a policy that mandates mentors be provided for novice teachers (Mullen, 2011). There are some districts and schools that have a voluntary approach to the mentoring of new teachers. Both have been shown to have benefits, but there are varying degrees of success with each approach (Mullen, 2011).

With mentoring being a common thread among many new teacher-induction programs, how is that component determined as being successful? There are several factors that must be examined to make this determination. One factor concerned the preparation of the mentor. Everston and Smithey (2000) showed that if a new teacher had a mentor who had completed a formal training program, the new teacher tended to show better classroom management. In a review of the literature conducted in 2011, Waterman and He examined 14 studies conducted to measure the connection between teacher retention and mentoring programs. Of the 14 studies, they found five that showed a positive correlation between teacher retention and an existing mentoring program. Of these five, four included professionally trained mentors as a component (Waterman & He, 2011). Three of the studies showed an inferential correlation, three found no correlation, and three had mixed findings regarding the relationship between mentoring programs and new teacher retention rates (Waterman & He, 2011).

Mentoring is a skill and like many skills, practice and preparation are important. What should be included in teacher mentor training to ensure mentors are ready to meet the demands of their new teacher mentees? The research says the following traits and skills should be addressed in mentor preparation. Mentors need to understand their audience and their needs (Moir, 2003; Odell & Huling, 2000; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Mentors must understand what to expect in regards to the needs of a new teacher. Mentors must have a “strong rationale for supporting novice teachers” (Wood & Stanulis, 2009, p. 7). The mentors must understand the focus and their role in supporting new teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Mentors must utilize a system of formative assessments with the new teacher to ensure that they are tailoring their support to fit the needs of their mentee (Bartel, 2005; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). The mentor must build a level of trust and comfortability with the new teacher for the relationship to be successful (Odell & Huling, 2000; Trubowitz, 2004; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). In order to ensure the mentor is meeting the needs of their new teacher mentee, they must employ a variety of coaching techniques including observations, collaborative planning, and demonstration through the presentation of model lessons (Helman, 2006; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Working with the new teacher, the mentor must collaborate in collecting and analyzing student work to ensure learning is taking place and effective instruction is being practiced (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Finally, the mentor must have the skill set to work with adult learners (Wood & Stanulis, 2009). If they lack the ability to make learning connections with adults, it is unlikely that they will be successful in cultivating a strong mentee–mentor relationship.

Another factor regarding mentoring as part of new teacher-induction programs concerns the type of support a mentor provides. Aside from instructional support, new teachers often require emotional support, which some successful induction programs provide (Griffin, 2010). Mentees often seek out support from their mentors and use them as sounding boards, and look for the mentor to provide structure, to give the mentee a set of expectations, and to serve as their advocate (Certo, 2005). Often, the mentee will share feelings and express worries to the mentor in the course of their

conversations. The new teacher often seeks advice on how to deal with the emotional strain and demands of the teaching profession (Trubowitz, 2004).

It is important that the mentor is available to the mentee, and contact frequency was one advantage that was pointed out in the Griffin (2010) study. Those that had more frequent meetings with their mentor showed greater satisfaction in the induction process. Freemyer et al. (2010) studied a state-mandated requirement for new teacher mentoring in the state of Indiana. The study primarily focused on two questions: “Do mandated mentoring programs increase teacher retention?” and “Does eliminating stipends for mentors have a negative effect on the mentoring program?” This study found that mentoring programs do have a positive effect on teacher retention; however, Indiana’s decision to no longer fund mentors’ stipends of US\$ 600 a year had a negative impact on the mentoring process (Freemyer et al., 2010). The study showed that after the stipend was eliminated, mentors tended to meet less frequently with their assigned new teachers. This had a negative effect on perceived retention rates of those new teachers who were being served by the programs (Freemyer et al., 2010). According to Freemyer et al. (2010), there was a strong positive relationship between the frequency of meetings between mentors and mentees, and the perceived longevity in the teaching profession ( $-0.279, p < .01$ ).

Aside from monetary rewards for mentors, the issue of time in an instructional environment had an affect on the relationship between the mentor and mentee, as well as on the quality of support that a new teacher will receive. Wood and Stanulis (2009) identified three models for mentoring within an induction program. The three models were mentor full-release, partial release, and no release: “Quality induction programs are set up to provide release time to mentor teachers to meet and work with novice teachers and acknowledge that mentoring should not take place in addition to full-time teaching” (Wood & Stanulis, 2009, p. 23).

Another aspect of a successful mentoring program is the pairing process in which mentors are assigned to new teachers. How should school systems match mentors with mentees? Kardos and Johnson (2010) studied mentoring programs in three states: Florida, Massachusetts, and



Michigan. In their study, they found that 78% of new teachers were assigned a formal mentor teacher with an average of 15 years experience. However, they found some problems regarding how these matches were made. The study showed that less than 50% of the teachers surveyed had mentors that taught the same subject matter (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). Kardos and Johnson (2010) reported increased interaction between mentors and mentees who shared the same subject matter in their teaching assignments. Ideal matches place mentors and mentees together based on teaching in the same school, at the same grade level, and in the same academic content area (Bartell, 2005; Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

### **Qualities of an Effective Mentor**

It is important that new teachers receive guidance from a quality mentor. There are several qualities that are important for a mentor to have in order to cultivate a strong relationship, provide the necessary instructional support, and provide guidance to a new teacher in the infancy of their career (Trubowitz, 2004).

In order to provide guidance to a new teacher, the mentor must have a certain level of experience that has allowed them to learn about the practice of teaching, and for them to be able to transfer that knowledge to someone else (Moir & Gless, 2001; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Although there is no set number of years, many districts require a minimum of three years of teaching experience in order to become a mentor (Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Recency is another factor dealing with time and experience. Aside from the number of years of experience a mentor has, this experience should be recent and relevant to the educational environment that the new teacher will face (Trubowitz, 2004). If the mentor does not have the current instructional background and knowledge, they may lack the ability to provide assistance to the new teacher (Trubowitz, 2004; Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

A new teacher must reflect on his/her practice as an educator to improve. In order to help facilitate this practice of self-reflection, a mentor must be reflective in their practice as an educator (Stanulis, Burrill, & Ames, 2007; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Reflecting on lessons taught, methods

of classroom management, and interactions with students and parents are examples of ways to improve a teacher's practice (Stanulis et al., 2007; Whitaker, 2004; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). In order to improve, an educator must be willing to revisit their actions, understand what went well and what did not, and make modifications when necessary (Stanulis et al., 2007; Whitaker, 2004; Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

When you examine the role of a teacher in relationship to their student, the primary focus of the educator is to impart knowledge, skills, and content. It is important for a new teacher to receive support that is geared toward their specific discipline and/or grade level. New teachers need mentors who are familiar with the content that they will deliver (Kardos & Johnson, 2010; Moir, 2003; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Aside from content knowledge, the mentor must support the new teacher in teaching strategies and pedagogy. To accomplish this support goal, the mentor must be well versed in instructional strategies and have a strong pedagogical background (Kardos & Johnson, 2010; Moir, 2003; Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

Modeling has always been an important part of teaching. Mentors must not only model instructional strategies and pedagogy for their mentee, but they must also model the idea of being a lifelong learner through their own continued professional development and growth (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). With any professional practice, it is important for the mentor to maintain current knowledge of the research and newest instructional strategies employed in teaching. Staying current will assist the mentor in providing support that applies to instructing today's students (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005).

A mentor must be able to communicate effectively with his/her new teacher mentee. In order for this communication to take place effectively, the mentor must have excellent interpersonal and communication skills (Wood & Stanulis, 2010). If they lack these interpersonal skills and ability to communicate with their mentee, the relationship will suffer (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Wood & Stanulis, 2010). Along the lines of interpersonal relationships, the mentor must also share a sense of empathy toward the needs of the new teacher (Wood & Stanulis, 2010).

Most of the experience for teachers serving as mentors is usually from teaching K-12 students. For a mentor to be successful, they must be able to relate information to adult learners (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles et al., 2011; Wood & Stanulis, 2010). The shift from pedagogy to andragogy may be difficult for some; however, to effectively mentor their mentee, the mentor must understand the motivations and habits of adult learners (Knowles et al., 2011).

Finally, a quality mentor must be committed to the process of mentoring (Feinman-Nemser, 2001). He/she must understand the process and functions of their role to effectively serve the needs of the new teacher (Feinman-Nemser, 2001). If the mentor fails to understand how the mentoring process works or what role they play in the new teacher's learning process, it is unlikely that the relationship will reach its full potential (Feinman-Nemser, 2001).

### **Role of the Mentor in the Induction Process**

The new teacher requires more from a mentor than administrative information, social support, or instructions on how to use the copy machine (Feiman-Nesmer, 2003). Although those things are important, a new teacher needs and has a desire to have conversations concerning the curriculum and how it is implemented; how to differentiate to meet student needs; to learn from others that have taught the same or similar subject areas; to create an equitable and safe learning environment; how to deal with parents; and how to use data to inform their instruction (Feiman-Nesmer, 2003; Hallam et al., 2012; Kardos & Johnson, 2010).

In a study that compared two different teacher-mentoring programs, Hallam et al. (2012) identified three key processes that are important for those in the role of a mentor to facilitate: modeling and support, personal relationships, and professional learning communities. When examining modeling and support, it was noted that mentors needed to provide instructional support and guidance (Hallam et al., 2012). This instructional support could involve modeling lessons and promoting continuous learning for the new teacher (Hallam et al., 2012).

The Hallam et al. (2012) study suggests that the mentoring relationship works best when there is a personal connection between the mentor and mentee. This relationship is something that

develops over time and is based on a sense of openness and mutual respect (Hallem et al., 2012). Trust between the mentor and mentee is key. This trust develops through a mutual comfort and increased interactions (Feiman-Nesmer, 2003; Hallem et al., 2012; Kardos & Johnson, 2010; Trubowitz, 2004).

Professional learning communities (PLCs) allow mentors and new teachers to interact with other colleagues from the same grade level or academic discipline (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2011; Hallem et al., 2012). The same kind of trust and relationship that is required between a mentor and mentee is similar to the types of relationships you see in well-functioning PLCs (DuFour et al., 2011; Hallem et al., 2012).

With increased accountability for teachers in today's educational climate, it is important that the mentor provides the new teacher mentee with guidance in understanding the assessment process for his/her particular school and/or district (Feiman-Nesmer, 2003; Kardos & Johnson, 2010). Part of understanding the assessment process involves making sense of the data produced by summative and formative assessments. Mentors play a large role in assisting new teachers in understanding and interpreting this data (Feiman-Nesmer, 2003; Kardos & Johnson, 2010). Part of the mentor's role in discussing instruction is how to use the data to inform instructional decisions and provide opportunities for differentiation (Kardos & Johnson, 2010).

### **Benefits for the Mentor**

The structure of an induction program and the mentoring component within it are designed to support a new teacher and reduce the risk of attrition. Although there has been much research on the benefits of a mentoring program for the mentee, there has been far less research conducted to examine what the intangible benefits are for mentoring for the mentor, especially in the educational K-12 setting.

Financial compensation, a tangible benefit, can be a motivating factor for some that choose to mentor. Many mentors may receive a stipend or some form of extra compensation; however, this is rarely commensurate with the amount of time mentors invest in the relationship or practice of

mentoring (Wood & Stanulis, 2010). It can be a motivating factor for some and help to increase the amount of time a mentor devotes to the relationship with the new teacher mentee (Freemyer et al., 2010). The lack of financial compensation or the perception of a lack of adequate financial compensation can lead to decreased contact time between the mentor and his/her new teacher mentee, which typically results in a less effective relationship (Freemyer et al., 2010).

Mentors may receive additional training in order to better assist the new teachers to which they are assigned. Rajuan, Tuchin, and Zuckermann (2011) examined the need to prepare mentors for the demands of mentoring through a formalized training program. These researchers noted that mentors benefit from the collaboration between themselves and their mentees. Mentors who receive formalized training also tend to provide more effective support to their new teacher mentees (Waterman & He, 2011).

Serving as a mentor allows for the veteran teacher to share in a sense of collegiality and collaboration. This collaboration often leads to “an opportunity for professional renewal” (Rajuan, Tuchin, & Zuckermann, 2011, p. 173). This collaboration allows veteran teachers to learn fresh ideas and new instructional strategies (Holloway, 2001; Rajuan, Tuchin, & Zuckermann, 2011). This collaboration can lead to the mentor feeling useful because of how they view their role in assisting the new teacher and providing them with guidance (Holloway, 2001). This collaboration can also lead to a feeling on the part of the mentor as being respected by their new teacher mentee along with their other colleagues (Holloway, 2001).

In an examination of teacher mentoring in California, Storms and Lee (2001) found that mentors who participated in the practice of mentoring novice teachers reflected more on their practice as classroom teachers. While assisting the development of the mentees’ ability to reflect on their classroom practices, the mentors became more reflective in terms of their own practices (Storms & Lee, 2001).

Many other professions use mentoring as a tool to retain novice professionals while providing opportunities for growth of the mentor. In business, mentoring young professionals may

lead to advancement opportunities and increased visibility within a company (Coates, 2012).

Coates (2012) also noted that those that mentor tend to enjoy benefits associated with “personal satisfaction, organizational recognition, renewed sense of purpose, and improved job satisfaction” (p. 93). Coates (2012), like Rajuan et al. (2011), noted that mentors enjoyed a sense of renewal in their own positions.

Healthcare is another field in which some examination of mentoring has taken place.

Hollister (2001) published a short article that examined how mentoring enhanced both the mentor’s and mentee’s professional life. Hollister (2001) noted that the practice of mentoring enhanced the skills of the mentor, helped develop and retain talent for the mentor’s organization, and created a legacy for the mentor and their organization by developing talent and cultivating ideas (Hollister, 2001).

### **Summary**

It is critical for schools to provide teachers with the proper support to ensure that they meet the needs of the students they serve. The increase in the number of teachers leaving the profession during their first five years of service is staggering, and the financial impact on already cash-strapped districts is dismal (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The lack of support for new teachers is a primary reason that they attribute to leaving the profession (Theobold & Michael, 2002). Forty percent of public school teachers who left the profession reported in a 2008–2009 survey that they received more opportunity to learn from colleagues in their current positions (NCES, 2010).

“Keeping new teachers in teaching is not the same as helping them become good teachers” (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, p. 25). Providing meaningful professional development is crucial to teacher success and retention (Desimone, 2009; Penuel et al., 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009). The literature clearly shows that mentoring is one effective means for teacher development (Abdullah, 2009; Bolam et al., 2006; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Penuel et al., 2007). Teacher-induction programs have been created to help curb the new teacher turnover rates, and mentoring tends to be a

key component within these programs (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Feiman-Nesmer, 2003). The research identifies many of the components that should be in place to create a successful mentoring experience. Factors such as the type of support provided (e.g. instructional and emotional) and the frequency with which it is given, all play a part in the success of the mentee–mentor relationship (Griffin, 2010).

For a mentor program to be successful, several key indicators must be met. The mentoring program must provide a quality mentor who is prepared to provide adequate support to their new teacher mentor. This support must be in key areas such as classroom instruction and management; differentiation; how to transfer their knowledge in the theories of education into the practice of teaching; how to assess students; how to deal with parents; and how to use data to make informed decisions in the classroom (Feiman-Nesmer, 2003; Hallam et al., 2012; Kardos & Johnson, 2010; Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

Mentors must be provided with experiences to grow in their practice of educating adults and providing support. These mentors should have the training and experience required to provide support to the new teachers (Moir & Gless, 2001; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). The mentor must be reflective in their practice (Stanulis et al., 2007; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). The mentor must have experience in a similar setting as their new teacher mentee (Kardos & Johnson, 2010; Moir, 2003; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). A mentor must be dedicated to the learning process and model lifelong learning (Norman & Feiman-Nesmer, 2005). The mentor must be able to relate and transfer knowledge to adult learners (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles et al., 2011; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). The mentor must also show a commitment to the mentoring process and be dedicated to assisting the new teacher through a critical time in their career (Feinman-Nesmer, 2001).

The new teacher receiving support is not the only party in this mentee–mentor relationship receiving valuable benefits from the interactions. Mentors receive valuable benefits, both tangible and intangible, from supporting new teachers. Some states and districts may offer the financial, tangible benefit of a stipend, while others may not (Freemyer et al., 2010). Mentors may receive

additional training, which would make them more effective in their own practice (Rajuan et al., 2011). The collaboration with the new teacher mentee allows for a renewal in a mentor's own practice as a teacher (Rajuan et al., 2011; Waterman & He, 2011).

What the literature fails to provide is an understanding as to how the relationship evolves between the mentor and mentee in the educational setting. Understanding how this relationship evolves is critical to increasing the effectiveness of mentoring programs, training mentors, and pairing the mentors with new teacher mentees. Further, it provides an additional basis for pairings. Finally, it may serve as a means to fortify the training processes of mentors (Freemyer et al., 2010; Kardos & Johnson, 2010; Moir, 2003; Wood & Stanulis, 2009).



### **CHAPER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative, grounded theory study examined the relationship between first-year teachers and their assigned mentors in a suburban school district in Central Florida. This relationship is part of the school system's overall teacher-induction program. Within this chapter, the chosen research design is described along with the research questions used to guide the inquiry. The participants, participant pairing, sampling size, and the research setting will be identified and described, followed by descriptions of the data to be collected, and the process to be used for its analysis. Finally, the ethical issues associated with the study and means to maintain trustworthiness will be discussed.

#### **Research Design**

A grounded theory research design was utilized in this qualitative study. Glaser and Strauss (1967) view the grounded theory method as a means for generating theory: "In discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept" (p. 23). Understanding how a relationship develops between a new teacher and their assigned mentor may help in providing additional structure and improvements in new teacher-mentoring programs. Grounded theory is an appropriate means to generate an understanding of how and why the relationships between first-year teachers and their mentors, who are experienced educators, change and develop over the academic year. The study will generate a theory of how these relationships develop and change over time.

Understanding how this relationship develops allows for improving the processes and experiences for participants. Within the confines of the grounded theory approach, understanding and studying the data carefully is crucial (Gall et al., 2007). Using this data to create categories is central to generating a theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Of the categories that present themselves, the researcher chooses one central phenomenon which will be the center of the theory generated

(Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It is around this central phenomenon that the researcher continues the coding process to determine the factors that influence the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Understanding the factors that influence the central phenomenon in this study is essential to creating a model of how the relationship between the mentee and mentor changes and evolves.

### **Research Question**

The over-arching research question for this qualitative, grounded theory study is how do first-year K-12 teachers and their assigned mentors move their relationship from one in which the novice educator only receives advice and guidance from the veteran teacher to a relationship in which there is an exchange of ideas that benefits the practice of both parties? Much of the research has addressed the use and benefit of a mentor for the mentee, but it does not address how the relationship changes throughout the year and becomes a learning experience for both educators. The following questions guided the research.

**Research Question 1:** What role does mentoring play in the professional development of a first-year teacher? Understanding the importance of this activity will give insight into the means through which the pairing of mentor and mentees is done.

**Research Question 2:** What are the key components to the mentee–mentor relationship? This question is not only meant to examine what key components are necessary for the relationship to be successful for the mentee but also what needs to be in place so that the mentor grows professionally as well.

**Research Question 3:** What factors need to be present for the mentee–mentor relationship to move from a single directional to a bidirectional exchange of information that benefits the practice of both parties? This question addresses the key issue in which a gap in the literature exists.

### **Researcher's Role**

The role of the researcher for this study is that of a human instrument who will be collecting data. The researcher's responsibility will be to collect the data through interviews, focus groups,

and to examine artifacts while coding the information and carrying out a through comparative analysis, thus developing categories that explain the theory behind the evolution of the mentee–mentor relationship (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is imperative that the researcher builds a level of trust between himself and the participants to promote frankness in their discussions and entries into their journals.

School administrators may view this research through the lens of a facilitator of professional development. A school administrator is tasked with the responsibility to ensure their staff has adequate professional development opportunities that are centered on meaningful learning activities. It is this commitment to teacher development that drives the desire and need to understand how such an important concept as mentoring evolves and changes. It is important that both the mentee and mentor see the worth in a program and are both able to take away with them a sense of career development. Building quality mentoring programs is important, and understanding how these relationships develop is an essential component to understanding and improving the process.

School administrators must focus their efforts not only on developing pedagogy but also on retaining quality teachers. It is critical that in today's educational climate with the increased accountability of schools and shrinking budgets that school administrators are proactive in providing support that leads to greater retention of new teachers. The stakes are high and the loss of quality teachers costs school districts large amounts of money and valuable human capital each year (Aballah, 2009). With 30–50% of new teachers leaving the profession within five years, our nation's students are faced with a revolving door of teachers who fail to meet their needs because they leave the profession before they ever have the chance of gaining the experience to become truly effective teachers (Abdallah, 2009; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2011). A quality teacher is the number one indicator for student success and school administrators must ensure that each classroom has a strong educator leading it (Theobald & Michael, 2002).

## **Participants**

The participants for this study are all professionally licensed teachers in the state of Florida and all are employed in the same school in the central part of the state. All of the participants are teachers at the secondary level and teach a variety of subject areas.

The participants are made up of five pairs of teachers. One member of each pair is a first-year, new teacher who is either traditionally or alternatively certified. The new teacher has a professional, renewable certificate or a non-renewable, three-year provisional certificate. The other member of the pair is an experienced teacher that is not new to the profession. The experienced teacher has at least three years of teaching experience and a professional, renewable certificate. The pairings are determined by the school and/or district administration and the researcher has no input regarding these groupings.

The participants all met the criterion sampling standards of being licensed teachers, one member of the pair a new teacher in their first year of teaching, one member of the pair an experienced teacher with at least three years of experience, and all participants teach at the K-12 level (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The participants, however, were not randomly selected. Through criterion sampling, the school administration referred nine pairs of teachers to the researcher for the purposes of soliciting their participation in the study. Then through voluntary sampling, those who were referred were given the option to participate. In order to participate, both the new teacher and experienced teacher had to agree. Each participant was offered a US\$ 100 gift card for their favorite retail store for their participation in the study and was informed of this prior to beginning data collection. Participation in the study was not mandated by the school district and was completely voluntary.

Of the nine pairs comprised of new teachers and their experienced mentors referred to the researcher by the school administration, six chose to participate, providing a total number of 12 participants. After receiving informed consent and conducting the first set of interviews, one pair of participants chose not to move forward in the study. In compliance with the informed consent form,

all records concerning participation up until that point were destroyed and their data was not included within this study. All participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities.

### Participant Pairs

The following is a description of the participant pairs whose data was included in this study.

Table 1 provides a description of the participant demographics by pair groupings. The table includes the participant's name, age, race, teaching experience, education, certification type, and subject matter taught.

Table 1: Participant Demographic Information

Pair	Name	Age	Race	Teaching Experience	Education	Certification	Subject
1	Vicki	61	C	18 years	Masters +	Professional	Math
	John	46	C	None prior	Bachelors	Temporary	Reading
2	Jennifer	33	C	6 years	Bachelors	Professional	English
	Megan	24	AA	Student teaching	Bachelors	Professional	English
3	Sydney	64	C	41 years	Masters +	Professional	Special Ed.
	Kenny	31	C	Student teaching	Masters	Professional	Special Ed.
4	Grant	33	A	11 years	Masters	Professional	Social Studies
	Scott	42	C	None prior	Doctorate	Temporary	Social Studies
5	Brad	33	C	7 years	Masters	Professional	Social Studies
	Katie	23	H	Student teaching	Bachelors	Professional	Journalism

*Please note, following are used in this table for race abbreviations: A=Asian; C=Caucasian; H=Hispanic; AA=African American. Also, professional certifications are renewable and temporary certificates are valid for three years and are non-renewable.*

Participant pair number one is comprised of mentor teacher Vickie and first-year teacher John. Vickie is a remedial math teacher with 18 years of teaching experience. She has mentored new teachers for 11 years. John is a reading specialist and is currently teaching under a non-renewable, three-year certificate. John is completing the certification process through the school district's alternative certification program.

Participant pair number two is comprised of mentor teacher Jennifer and first-year teacher Megan. Jennifer is an 11<sup>th</sup> grade English language arts teacher with six years of teaching experience. She has mentored new teachers for two years. Megan is a 9<sup>th</sup> grade English language arts teacher and has a professional, renewable certificate. Megan completed a traditional teacher preparation program and has completed one semester as a student teacher prior to this school year.

Participant pair number three is comprised of mentor teacher Sydney and first-year teacher Kenny. Sydney is an inclusion special education teacher with 41 years of teaching experience. The number of years Sydney estimated she had been mentoring new teachers was 25–30 years. Kenny is an inclusion special education teacher who has a professional, renewable certificate. Kenny obtained certification through a master's degree program and has one semester of student teaching prior to this school year.

Participant pair number four is comprised of mentor teacher Grant and first-year teacher Scott. Grant is a social studies teacher with 11 years of teaching experience. Grant has been serving as a new teacher mentor for four years. Scott is a social studies teacher and is currently teaching under a non-renewable, three-year certificate. Scott is completing the certification process through the school district's alternative certification program.

Participant pair number five is comprised of mentor teacher Brad and first-year teacher Katie. Brad is a social studies teacher with seven years of teaching experience. This is Brad's first year serving as a new teacher mentor. Katie is a journalism teacher and has a professional, renewable certificate. Katie completed a traditional teacher preparation program and had one semester of student teaching prior to this school year.

### **Sample Size**

The participants for this study were sampled based on criteria (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The mentors were required to be teachers with at least three years of experience, to have a professional, renewable certificate, and to be assigned to the mentee by the school's administration. The mentee was required to be in their first year as a teacher, to be certified with either a professional, renewable or provisional, three-year non-renewable certificate, and had to be assigned to their mentor by the school administration. A key aspect to participation was that both the mentor and mentee had to agree to participate. If either was unwilling, both were disqualified from participation. The selection criteria created a very limited pool of study participants.

Charmaz (2006) recommends having, in a grounded theory study, 20–30 participants to reach theoretical saturation. The lack of possible participants inhibited the ability to have this many participants for this study. Unlike quantitative research, which relies on statistical differences, qualitative research is designed to provide a deep understanding of a subject (Mays & Pope, 1995). When determining an appropriate sample size, it is important to take into account the amount of time invested in interviewing study participants, the depth of these discussions, and the limitations of time and resources of the researcher (Mays & Pope, 1995).

Saturation is important for identifying key phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The correct sample size is when nothing new begins to present itself among the study participants (Curry et al., 2009). This study examined ten participants: five mentors and five mentees. Through the in-depth interviews, focus group sessions, and participant journaling, strong themes and phenomena presented themselves. The smaller number of participants allowed the researcher to gain a greater depth of knowledge while still reaching saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

### **Setting**

The site chosen for this study is a large comprehensive high school in Central Florida. The researcher will refer to the school as East End High School. Located in a suburban community outside of Orlando, Florida, the school has a large student body serving 2,050 students. The faculty is made up of 131 teachers with an average tenure of 12 years of experience (McKenzie, 2012). The faculty racial composition for academic year 2011-2012 was 63% Caucasian, 20% African American, 12% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 2% unidentified (McKenzie, 2012). There is one principal and four assistant principals that make up the school's administrative team.

The school's student population is diverse. According to their most recent accreditation executive summary from AdvancEd (2012) for academic year 2011-2012, 35% of East End students are Caucasian, 16% African American, 30% Hispanic, 6% Asian, and 12% are reported as being other. Approximately 45% of students receive free or reduced lunch, 3.5% are English as second language learners, and 11% receive special education services (AdvancEd, 2012).

The school operates on a traditional academic calendar beginning the school year in late August with completion in early June. The school utilizes a four-by-four block schedule, which allows students to finish half-credit courses in nine weeks and full-credit courses in one semester. Students attend four classes a day, each lasting approximately 90 minutes. Occasionally, modified schedules are utilized to accommodate early release time or special school programs (McKenzie, 2012).

The school district is very large geographically, covering 1,156 square miles, and has schools that are considered as both suburban and rural. The district has 7 high schools, 10 middle schools, and 21 elementary schools (AdvancEd, 2012). There are also three charter schools of choice and one alternative learning center (District Website, 2013). The district is the largest employer in the county with 5,500 employees (District Website, 2013). The district will be referred to as Central County Schools in this study.

The site, within this particular district, was purposefully chosen for several reasons. First, Florida has had no requirement for new teacher induction since 1997 (Milton et al., 2009). Although there is no requirement for a new teacher-induction program, most districts have one in place, and mentoring is a component of most (Milton et al., 2009). With the lack of a requirement for new teacher-induction programs, this research could provide insight into how the relationship between a mentor and mentee develops, thus providing districts with information that could be helpful in designing their own mentoring programs.

The school was chosen partly due to its size. The school has 131 faculty members. This number of faculty members promotes diversity in the staff, varying experience levels among faculty, and the availability of new teachers to participate in the study. The number of first-year teachers varies from year to year, but averages between five and eight each year (McKenzie, 2012). For school year of 2012–2013, nine first-year teachers joined the instructional staff.

The researcher is familiar with this site because of prior employment with this school. The researcher has a prior relationship with the school's administration. Due to this prior relationship,



the administration was familiar with the researcher and his character. The pre-existing trust between the researcher and school administration was one basis for granting access to the possible study participants within the school.

Finally, the school was chosen because it identifies the mentoring program for first-year teachers as its primary means of new teacher induction at the school level. This makes the relationship between the mentor and mentee very critical to the development of the first-year teacher. Although there is no state requirement, the school district requires new teachers to be assigned mentors. The school is in compliance with this requirement. Mentors are assigned to all first-year teachers by the school's administration. Pairings are made with a number of factors in mind. These factors include the grade level, subject area, and available mentors. Ideally, the school attempts to pair new teachers with mentors who teach the same subject area, but the administrators admit that this is not always possible. All factors are considered and pairings are decided upon by the administration (McKenzie, 2012).

### **Data Collection**

Data collection took place during the fall and spring semester of the 2012–2013 academic school year. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix-A) was gained prior to the collection of any data. A letter of cooperation from the school (see Appendix-C) was included with the IRB application. The IRB application was submitted after a successful defense of the dissertation proposal in September of 2012. IRB approval was granted in mid-October of 2012. Informed consent (see Appendix-B) was gained prior to any data collection from study participants.

This study utilized three forms of data collection from the participants: interviews, focus groups, and participant journaling. Along with the primary data collected through interviews, focus groups, and participant journaling, documents and artifacts were collected from the Florida Department of Education and East End High School. Each of these provided information that was critical in understanding the development of the mentee–mentor relationship.

## **Interviews**

Each participant was interviewed three times during the 2012–2013 school year. Each participant was interviewed separately to promote candidness from that participant. Due to the lack of proximity of the researcher to the participants, it was not feasible to conduct the interviews face-to-face. Each interview was conducted by utilizing Skype, a web-based video-conferencing system. Interviews were scheduled with computer access times in mind, and as a result, none of the interviews were conducted by telephone.

The interview was a semi-structured format and audio recordings were made. All first-year teachers (mentees) were asked one set of questions and all experienced teachers (mentors) were asked another set of questions. Both sets of questions were similar in nature but were designed to provide responses from the participants that reflected their roles in the mentee–mentor relationship. Each of the three interviews included different questions and each interview was audio recorded and transcribed (Morse et al., 2009). The transcript was submitted to participants for member checks to ensure that it was a true and accurate reflection of the interview (Charmaz, 2006). The interviews were utilized to gain an understanding of the mentoring process from both the mentor and mentee, and to see how the relationship evolved over time (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Prior to administering each of the three interviews, the questions were piloted to ensure they were valid, reliable, and addressed the research questions posed for this study (Creswell, 2007). The researcher solicited two mentor teachers and their assigned new teacher mentees to assist with reviewing the questions. These teachers were located in a school that was close in proximity to the researcher. The interviews were administered in person with the teachers and responses were compared to the research questions. After reviewing the responses and receiving verbal feedback from the pilot participants, adjustments were made as needed prior to the actual interviews with research subjects. No information gathered during the piloting of the interview questions was utilized in the findings of this study.

**Initial Interviews.** The first round of interviews took place during the first two weeks of November. This was after IRB approval was granted and possible study participants were contacted. East End High School had already identified possible participants for the researcher and solicitation to participate was emailed immediately following permission from the IRB. Participants received and signed the informed consent form prior to any formal conversations. These interviews allowed the participants to introduce themselves to the researcher and discuss their feelings on the upcoming school year. Questions were concentrated on the expectations of their roles over the coming school year. The following table contains the questions utilized in the initial interview with mentor study participants.

Table 2

Initial Interview Questions: Mentor

- 
1. What previous professional experience do you have prior to becoming a teacher?
  2. Have you ever had a formal relationship with a mentor before, and if so, please explain the context of those relationships.
  3. What characteristics do you feel are important for a mentor and why?
  4. What type of knowledge and/or experience do you hope to gain from your mentee this school year?
  5. How do you view your role in this mentee–mentor relationship?
  6. How are you going to ensure you are a successful participant in this relationship?
  7. In order to have a successful school year and relationship with your mentee, what expectations do you have for the new teacher you are assisting as it pertains to this professional relationship?
  8. In what ways do you hope to grow as a professional this year and how do you think the mentee–mentor relationship will effect that growth?
- 

Questions one and two were designed to illicit background information from the participants and identify possible activities that could influence their mentor-mentee relationship. The remaining questions were each anchored within the literature discussed in Chapter Two. Question

three examined the perceptions of the participant in relation to their belief of what characteristics are important for a mentor to demonstrate (Wood & Stanulis, 2009; Trubowitz, 2004). Questions four and eight asked the mentor participants how they hoped to benefit professionally from their relationship with their mentees and how they viewed mentoring as a form of professional development (Desimone, 2009; Penuel et al, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2011). Finally, questions five, six, and seven pertained to roles and responsibilities of both the mentor and mentee participants and how these would become evident within the relationship (Feiman-Nesmer, 2003; Hallem et al, 2012; Kardos & Johnson, 2010).

The questions posed to the mentee participants during the first round of interviews were similar in nature to those asked of their mentor counterparts. The following table depicts the questions asked of the mentee participants during the initial interviews.

Table 3

Initial Interview Questions: Mentee

- 
1. What previous professional experience do you have prior to becoming a teacher?
  2. Have you ever had a formal relationship with a mentor before, and if so, please explain the context of those relationships.
  3. What characteristics do you feel are important for a mentor and why?
  4. What type of knowledge and/or experience do you hope to gain from your mentor this school year?
  5. How do you view your role in this mentee–mentor relationship?
  6. How are you going to ensure you are a successful participant in this relationship?
  7. What types of structure does the mentor need to provide to be a successful part of this relationship?
  8. How do you plan on communicating your professional and emotional needs to your mentor?
-

Similar to the first mentor interview questions, questions one and two of the mentee interview were designed to gather background information that could serve to influence the mentor-mentee relationship. Question three asked the mentee what characteristics they thought were important for a mentor to possess and question seven related to the structures that needed to be provided by the mentor in order to facilitate a successful relationship (Stanulis et al, 2007; Wood & Stanulis, 2009; Trubowitz, 2004). Question four asked the mentee to provide their perception on what role they felt the mentor-mentee relationship would play in their professional development during the coming year (Desimone, 2009; Penuel et al, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2011). Questions five, six, and eight addressed what the mentees perceived to be their role within the relationship and how they would communicate their needs to their mentor (Feiman-Nesmer, 2003; Hallem et al, 2012; Kardos & Johnson, 2010).

**Second Interviews.** The second round of interviews took place after the conclusion of the first semester in late January. The timing of these interviews allowed the mentors and mentees to reflect on an entire semester of working with one another. Due to the school's schedule and format of a four-by-four block (AdvancEd, 2012; McKenzie, 2012), teachers would be receiving new students for the second semester. This change enabled the new teachers to reflect on how their first semester had progressed and what they would do differently with their new set of students. The timing of the interview also gave the mentor teachers an opportunity to reflect on their interactions with their mentees and their progress as new teachers. Similar to the first interview, the questions asked in the second round of interviews were similar for each group. Below is a table that depicts the questions asked to the mentor participants during the second set of interviews.

Table 4

## Second Interview Questions: Mentor

- 
1. What types of activities have you been doing with your mentee?
  2. What activities do you find most beneficial for the mentee and why? Least beneficial and why?
  3. What kinds of things have you learned from this experience thus far that have helped you in your own professional practice?
  4. How would you characterize your relationship with your mentee (one sided or collaborative)? If one sided, why do you feel the relationship has remained this way? If collaborative, please briefly describe how this collaboration developed.
  5. What has been the most difficult aspect of your relationship with your mentee and why?
  6. What are some of your hopes for this relationship throughout the remainder of the year?
  7. What are some of the “light bulb” moments you have seen with your mentee? What are some of the “light bulb” moments you have had yourself during this process?
- 

Each of the questions posed to the mentor participants were anchored in the literature presented in Chapter Two or the gap in the current research. Questions one and two asked the participants to reflect on what types of activities they were engaged in with their mentees and which they saw as the most and least beneficial (Feiman-Nesmer, 2003; Hallem et al, 2012; Kardos & Johnson, 2010). Question three addressed the role the mentoring relationship had played in the mentor’s own professional development at this point within the school year (Desimone, 2009; Penuel et al, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2011). Questions four, five, and six required the mentor to reflect on how the relationship had progressed thus far in the school year and what were some strengths and weaknesses they saw in their interactions with their mentees. These questions addressed the gap in the literature and provided an opportunity for the mentor participant to provide responses that were instrumental in developing the understanding of how the relationship between a mentor and mentee develops over time. The final question allowed the mentor to reflect on the

growth they had witnessed with their mentee and within themselves (Stanulis et al, 2007; Wood & Stanulis, 2009).

The questions for the mentees in the second set of interviews was similar to the mentors and addressed the same perceptions of how the relationship was progressing, what roles was the relationship playing in their development, and how they hoped to continue to move forward. The questions were anchored in the literature presented in Chapter Two and addressed the gap in the current research concerning the development of the mentor-mentee relationship over time. Below is a table that contains the questions asked of the mentees during the second round of interviews.

Table 5

Second Interview Questions: Mentee

- 
1. What types of activities have you been doing with your mentor?
  2. What activities do you find most beneficial for the mentor and why? Least beneficial and why?
  3. What kinds of things have you learned from this experience thus far that have helped you in your own professional practice in the classroom/school setting?
  4. How would you characterize your relationship with your mentee (one sided or collaborative)? If one sided, why do you feel the relationship has remained this way? If collaborative, please briefly describe how this collaboration developed.
  5. What has been the most difficult aspect of your relationship with your mentor and why?
  6. Describe some experiences with your mentor that you recognize as important toward your development as an educator.
  7. What are some of your hopes for this relationship throughout the remainder of the year?
- 

Questions one and two asked the mentee participants to reflect on what types of activities they were engaged in with their mentors and which they saw as the most and least beneficial (Feiman-Nesmer, 2003; Hallem et al, 2012; Kardos & Johnson, 2010). Question three addressed the role the mentoring relationship had played in the mentee's professional development at this point within the school year (Desimone, 2009; Penuel et al, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2011).

Questions four, five, and six required the mentee to reflect on how the relationship had progressed thus far in the school year and what were some strengths and weaknesses they saw in their interactions with their mentors. Question seven required the mentee to forecast how they would like the relationship to progress throughout the remainder of the school year. These questions address the gap in the literature and provided an opportunity for the mentor participant to provide responses that were instrumental in developing the understanding of how the relationship between a mentor and mentee develops over time.

**Final Interviews.** The third and final rounds of interviews were held at the end of April and during the first week in May. Although there was still approximately a month left within the academic calendar, the participants were able to reflect on their interactions during the past school year. The mentors were able to give their perspective on the growth they had seen in their new teacher mentee, lessons they had learned from the experience, and their thoughts on their satisfaction level concerning the relationship and how it evolved. The table below contains the questions posed to the mentor participants during the final interview.

Table 6

Final Interview Questions: Mentor

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1. What has been the most rewarding part of the relationship with your mentee and why?
2. What has been the most difficult part of the relationship with your mentee and why?
3. In your opinion, what are the key factors to ensuring a mentee–mentor relationship is successful and why?
4. In the future, if you choose to mentor another new teacher, what will you make sure to do the same and what will you do differently?
5. How can school administrators best support mentee–mentor relationships to ensure they are successful?
6. What would you say were the most important things you learned during this process?
7. What are your hopes for your mentee and how do you see yourself using the experiences gained through the process of mentoring?



Similar to the two previous interviews, the questions were anchored in the literature presented in Chapter Two or provided insight to the current gap in the literature addressing the development of the mentor-mentee relationship over time. Question one and two asked the mentor participants to reflect on their feelings associated with the relationship. These questions pertain directly to the “mutually beneficial” aspect of the research questions posed for this study and the benefits and drawbacks associated with relationship for the mentor (Holloway, 2001; Rajuan et al, 2011). Question three addressed what mentors believe were factors that lead to a successful relationship over this past school year and question four asked what if there was anything the participants would do differently if they chose to mentor again in the future (Feiman-Nesmer, 2003; Hallem et al, 2012; Kardos & Johnson, 2010). Question five addresses the perceived role of the school’s administration with respects to the mentor-mentee relationship and how school officials can best provide support. Questions six and seven ask the mentors to reflect on what they had learned during the relationship, how it has affected their own professional development, and the hopes for their mentees moving forward (Desimone, 2009; Holloway, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2011; Penuel et al, 2007; Rajuan et al, 2011).

The new teacher mentees were able to share their perceptions of how the school year had progressed, the progress they had made in the classroom, and how the relationship with their mentor had influenced their growth as professionals. The questions were anchored in the literature presented in Chapter Two or provided insight to the current gap in the literature addressing the development of the mentor-mentee relationship over time. The table on the following page provides the questions asked of the mentee participants during the last set of interviews.

Table 7

## Final Interview Questions: Mentee

- 
- What has been the most rewarding part of the relationship with your mentee and why?
  - What has been the most difficult part of the relationship with your mentee and why?
  - In your opinion, what are the key factors to ensuring a mentee–mentor relationship is successful and why?
  - In the future, if you choose to mentor a new teacher, from your experiences as a mentee, how will you approach the relationship?
  - How can school administrators best support mentee–mentor relationships to ensure they are successful?
  - What would you say were the most important things you learned during this process?
  - How do you think this experience will shape the way in which you approach teaching? Do you believe all people wanting to become teachers need mentors? Why or why not?
- 

Question one and two asked the mentee participants to reflect on their feelings associated with the relationship (Holloway, 2001; Rajuan et al, 2011). Question three addressed what mentees believe were factors that lead to a successful relationship over this past school year and question four asked the participants that if they were to mentor a new teacher in the future, how would they approach the relationship (Feiman-Nesmer, 2003; Hallem et al, 2012; Kardos & Johnson, 2010). Question five addresses the perceived role of the school’s administration with respects to the mentor-mentee relationship and how school officials can best provide support. Questions six and seven ask the mentors to reflect on what they had learned during the relationship, how it has affected their own professional development, and the hopes for their mentees moving forward (Desimone, 2009; Holloway, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2011; Penuel et al, 2007; Rajuan et al, 2011). Question seven also asked the mentees if and why they felt that all new teachers should or should not have a mentor assigned (Certo, 2005; Griffin, 2010; Wood & Stanulis, 2009; Stanulis et al, 2007).

### **Focus Groups**

Two focus group meetings were held that gave the opportunity to mentors to interact with other mentors and discuss their experiences working with the new teachers. There were two focus group meetings held with the new teacher participants. This gave the mentees the opportunity to discuss their experiences as new teachers and reflect on the support the mentors were providing them. The focus groups for the mentors and mentees took place during the same periods. The first set of focus group meetings occurred following the completion of the first semester near the end of January 2013. The mentor participants attended their own focus group session (see Appendix-D). This was followed by a focus group session held for the mentor participants (see Appendix-E). Each of the participants participated in their respective focus group sessions. The second set of focus group meetings took place in the last week of April 2013, at the beginning of the fourth quarter of school. As with the previous focus group sessions, all of the mentor participants attended one focus group (see Appendix-F) and the mentee participants all attended another focus group (see Appendix-G). There were no participants absent from their respective focus group sessions. All focus group meetings lasted approximately one hour, were audio recorded, and transcribed for coding purposes (see Appendix-J). Due to the limitations of Skype, the focus groups were held utilizing another web-based video-conferencing system, Google Chat.

### **Participant Journaling**

Participants were asked to keep journals to detail their experiences within the mentee–mentor relationship during the 2012–2013 school year. Instructions were given to the participants about how they should make entries into their journals (see Appendix-H). These following instructions were included: a) participants were asked to make at least one entry on a bi-weekly basis reflecting on their mentoring relationship, and b) participants were asked to use the guiding questions when needed to assist in their reflection.

The following questions were prompts that could have been used by the participants when needed: What was your interaction, if any, with your mentee–mentor? How did this interaction

make you feel, how could this interaction have been made better? What do you believe you are learning most from your mentee–mentor? These prompts were given to provide focus, if needed, and structure, but were not intended to limit the participant’s responses (Creswell, 2007). This journal was a Microsoft Word document and was submitted electronically through email (see Appendix-K). The journals were collected from participants on a monthly basis beginning in November with the last submission made during the first week of May.

### **Additional Data**

Documents from the district and school sites were gathered to understand the formal structure of the teacher-induction process and the role mentoring plays within it. Information from the Florida Department of Education regarding the historical background of their current teacher-induction process was accessed to gain an understanding of how the program has evolved and changed. Information from the Florida Department of Education regarding teacher certification including paths to professional certification were accessed to provide an understanding to the researcher about the varied experience levels and backgrounds of the new teachers (Florida Department of Education, 2012).

Information from the school district website was used to provide information on the research setting and demographic information. The school’s published executive summary on the AdvancEd accreditation website provided detailed information on student demographics, internal structures of the school, such as the curriculum and schedules, and contextual information on the focus areas of the school’s improvement processes (AdvancEd, 2012).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in a grounded theory study can be very complex and uses various detailed procedures (Creswell, 2007). To begin analysis, the data must be broken down from its whole form. For this study, this is achieved through coding the data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) articulate three phases of coding in the grounded theory approach: open, axial, and selective. In the open

coding phase, salient categories of information are determined and compared to one another (see Appendix-M) in an attempt to reach “saturation” within the categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

After the open coding phase, a more selective process takes place (see Appendix-N). In axial coding, the researcher is looking for a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Then the data are examined again to determine how the other categories determined in open coding relate to the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Finally, in the selective coding phase, a representation of the factors that affect the central phenomenon is created, and it is from these factors that the theory is created (Creswell, 2007).

For each of the forms of data collection involving the study participants, the three coding procedures were utilized. Interviews, after their transcription, were open coded and compared to one another. The similarities were acknowledged and the central phenomenon identified. The same process was utilized for the focus groups. The transcripts from the focus groups were examined separately and compared between the pairs of participants. Finally, the journals were examined and coded in a similar fashion. By comparing the three sources of data and the information obtained during the coding process, a theory could be generated.

The analysis of the documents obtained from the district, school site, and the Florida Department of Education was utilized to present the background on the issue and an understanding of how the mentoring program is currently structured. It also served as a means to understand the influences that the school district or State Department of Education have on how the schools facilitate their new teacher-induction and mentoring programs.

### **Trustworthiness**

To ensure the researcher maintains a standard of credibility, several means of checks and balances were utilized. First, because there are three main sources of data that are generated from the participants—interviews, focus groups, and participant journals—the research contains a triangulation of data (Creswell, 2007). Secondly, there was a prolonged engagement with the participants. The participants were engaged in the study for approximately six months. Finally, the

participants were allowed to view the transcripts from the interviews and focus groups. They provided feedback if needed, and checked for any errors generated through transcriptions. Participants had complete control over their journal entries. Two participants left the study shortly after the first interviews were conducted. All data that they contributed through this interview were omitted from the findings and the recordings of their interviews were destroyed. No transcriptions existed from these interviews, and the participants did not take part in either of the focus group sessions. These two participants did not submit any electronic journal entries.

Adding to the body of literature, ensuring that the findings can be transferred to similar situations is an important aspect of qualitative research. This study ensured transferability by providing a thick description of the mentoring program and process. It also provides a rich description through the use of an extensive amount of data generated both through the participants and through artifact collection (Creswell, 2007). Dependability and confirmability will both be anchored in providing an audit trail (see Appendixes I-M) and in the use of my committee as a source of checks and balances (Creswell, 2007).

### **Ethical Issues**

Maintaining ethical practices and behavior throughout the research process is critical to producing an accurate and trusted study. It is important that researchers use ethics as a lens when making decisions that affect their research and participants. Ethical behavior is key to creating comfort and trust with the study participants and producing a quality piece of work that adds value to the field of education.

Confidentiality is a key factor allowing the participants to be open and frank with their information. This is why pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of participants. Participants are referred to by pseudonyms that are first-name only. The pseudonyms are known only to the researcher and the specific study participants. A list of actual names and pseudonyms is stored digitally and is password protected.

The research site itself has been assigned pseudonyms. The school is known as East End High School and the district is known as Central County Schools. No identifying factors will be present that would allow the reader to know who the participants were, what school sites they taught at, or what district the study took place in.

All data generated from the study will also be protected by ensuring it is stored in a locked, secure area if printed, and that the data are password protected if the files are electronic. All records and data from this study will be kept secure for a period of no less than five years and will be destroyed at the end of this period.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

The focus and motivation for this study was to understand how a mentoring relationship between a new, first-year teacher mentee and their assigned, experienced educator mentor develops over time and how both parties benefit professionally from the experience. The study specifically examines secondary public school teachers: grades 9–12 in Central Florida. The study serves as a means to not only understand the tasks involved in a successful mentoring program such as coaching, observations, assistance with lesson planning, and other basic functions of teaching, but this research also provides an avenue to understanding what parameters need to be in place for the interpersonal component of the relationship to thrive.

Understanding how this relationship develops and changes over time will allow school districts to be able to put into place structures that promote positive experiences for both the mentee and mentor. Ensuring new teachers are provided support through a formalized process is critical to their overall development and retention (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Florida does not require mentors for new teachers, and because of the lack of this requirement, the state has no formal structure in place (Milton et al., 2009). With many districts providing mentors to first-year teachers as a component of a formalized induction program, several models for the delivery of these services exist. In examining the processes utilized by East End High School and the Central County School System, components of the mentoring program that work well and others that do not function to best meet the needs of those it serves can be identified. Understanding these best practices and current limitations will serve to improve the program and help create a model that is transferrable from district to district.

In chapter four, the findings of the data collection for this study will be discussed. First, a brief description of the background of the participants will be presented and the research questions



will be re-stated. This will be followed by a detailed analysis of the three interviews held with each participant. Next, the focus group meetings and the themes that emerged from them will be examined, followed by an explanation of the findings from the journaling component of the study. An analysis will be presented through the triangulation of the data points. From the analysis, a model will be presented. Finally, a brief summary of the central themes that emerged will be presented.

### **Background of the Participants**

Knowing the background of the participants within the study helps us understand what factors may influence their decisions and the type of support the mentors and mentees may provide to each other during this relationship. The new teacher mentees and experienced teacher mentors bring to this relationship varied experiences that influence their interactions. Among the mentors, all have prior experience mentoring new teachers with the exception of Brad. This is Brad's first experience mentoring a new teacher. Vicki has 11 years' experience mentoring new teachers, Jennifer has 2 years, and Grant has 4 years. Sydney had the most years by far in mentoring new teachers, and this correlated with her number of years of teaching experience. Sydney estimated that she had mentored new teachers from somewhere between 25 and 30 years. Sydney noted that these were not always official mentee–mentor relationships and there were some years in which she did not assist any new teachers. Sydney's 25–30 years of mentoring experience was not continuous.

Of the mentees, Megan, Kenny, and Katie all completed traditional teaching programs either through earning a bachelor's or master's degree. With the completion of a traditional teaching program, these participants have one semester of student teaching experience. John and Scott are both enrolled in the district's alternative certification program. Through this program, they must complete two years of teaching and meet the requirements stipulated on their certification letter from the Florida Department of Education. If they complete all of the stipulations successfully,

John and Scott will qualify for a professional, renewable certificate (McKenzie, 2012). Neither John nor Scott had any formal classroom teaching experience prior to this school year. They both are transitioning from other careers. John previously worked in retail management and Scott was a practicing attorney. One special note is that Scott was hired to teach at East End High School because of his legal background. Scott's legal experience correlated with the law-related courses he teaches at East End High School.

### **Research Questions and Data Collection**

The data-collection methods of interviews, focus groups, and participant journaling were all designed to address the primary research questions of this study. The over-arching research question for this study was how first-year K-12 teachers and their assigned mentors move their relationship from one in which the novice educator only receives advice and guidance from the veteran teacher to a relationship in which there is an exchange of ideas that benefits the practice of both parties. This question was designed to examine not only the surface-level activities but to uncover the factors that lead to a successful interpersonal relationship. The over-arching question was supported by three sub-questions.

**Research question 1:** What role does mentoring play in the professional development of a first-year teacher?

**Research question 2:** What are the key components to the mentee–mentor relationship?

**Research question 3:** What factors need to be present for the mentee–mentor relationship to move from a single directional to a bidirectional exchange of information that benefits the practice of both parties?

### **Interviews**

The semi-structured interviews and the questions posed to participants were designed to promote responses that uncover both the activities the participants participated in within their mentee–mentor structure, and motivational factors that alluded to the interpersonal aspect of their relationship. Each of the three interviews with participants had a somewhat different focus, but all of them included questions to find out how the relationship was progressing, why it was progressing in the manner it was, and what could change to improve it. All of the questions were open ended and often led to follow-up questions. The questions served more as a guide, and the participants could and did deviate from them. This allowed for a much more in-depth discussion with the participants. Throughout the interviewing process, the guiding questions remained similar for the mentee and mentor. The key difference between the sets of questions lay within the participant’s perspective.

### **Initial Interview: Mentors**

The first interview was designed to gain some background information from the participant and understand their expectations for the coming academic school year. An emphasis was placed on the expectations for the mentee–mentor relationship. This line of questioning (see Appendix-O) and the understanding of expectations allows for the examination of the initial perceptions of what the participants see as important factors for the mentee–mentor relationship. Responses were consistent but varied somewhat because of the varying experience level and past experiences of both the mentors and mentees. Dealing mainly with expectations, the questions address all three key elements of the research questions: the role of mentoring in professional development, elements needed for a successful relationship, and how the participants expect the relationship to change throughout the year.

These questions gave the mentors an opportunity to discuss their backgrounds, their experience of having a mentor, and what they believe are important characteristics of a mentee–mentor relationship. The questions also allowed them to look forward into the school year ahead

and lay out expectations that they had for their mentee–mentor relationship. Finally, the mentors were able to discuss how they wanted to grow by mentoring a new teacher.

**Previous work experience.** When the mentors discussed their previous experience prior to teaching, each background was slightly different, but there was one interesting commonality. All mentors at some point had worked for some type of retail business, with all but one serving as a supervisor or manager.

Brad had served as a customer service manager for a major retailer while in college. He recalled the experience as beneficial and thought it would serve him well as a new teacher mentor.

I was actually a service desk supervisor for Kmart while I was in college. With that position, I would train new staff on how to cashier, process returns, and other things associated with the frontline. I think this experience will be helpful when I am working with Katie. I learned from that job that it is important to have a lot of patience when teaching things to others.

Sydney recalled her time in the late 1960s as an associate in a clothing store and felt it had helped her throughout her years of teaching.

After I graduated with a liberal arts degree in psychology and sociology, I was a buyer and salesperson for a high-end woman's clothing store. In both jobs I learned how to deal with the public, and in the sales position I learned how to sell a product. Both of these skills have served me well in the teaching profession because it gave me the opportunity to learn how to explain things and make people want to do things, which back then, was to buy expensive clothes.

Jennifer had worked as a retail manager but also had extensive leadership skills through her time serving as an officer in the United States Army. She attributed her perceived ability to be a good mentor from her experiences leading service members throughout her army career.

**Previous mentoring relationships.** When the participants were asked about prior formal mentoring relationships, all but Vicki had stated that they had had a mentoring relationship when they first began teaching. Vicki began her teaching career in the Denver Colorado area and stated her school did not assign her a mentor. She credits the experience of not having a mentor as influencing her to want to help new teachers today.

I was just sort of put in a classroom, given a textbook, and told here yah go. It was a pretty difficult school and I did not know if I was going to make it the first day, much less the first year. I think that is one of the main reasons I like helping new teachers now, because I realize how it is to be out there all alone.

Jennifer, Grant, and Brad all had mentors officially assigned to them during their first year of teaching. Brad noted he also considered his supervising teacher during his student teaching assignment as an official mentor. Sydney stated she did not have an official mentor when she began teaching. She commented that Louisiana, where she began her teaching career, was hiring many inexperienced teachers during the time because of the integration of the schools. She went to work in a school that had traditionally been attended by African American students. An African American teacher who had been at the school for 20 plus years took her under his wing.

I was hired as a PE teacher because I was tall, and I would agree to share an office with a 60-year-old Black coach. This man taught me more about teaching and teaching techniques than all the education courses I took to earn an education certificate.

When asked about why they wanted to mentor new teachers, all participants responded that they wanted to provide support to new teachers. Each of the participants discussed the challenges associated with teaching and the need for support in areas such as the curriculum, classroom management, and instructional techniques. Sydney was critical of the teaching profession in general and the amount of support it provides. She sees mentoring a new teacher as a primary

means to providing support during the first year. Brad specifically mentioned in his response the need to make sure that teachers know what he referred to as “basic administrative tasks.” He sighted taking attendance, schedules, faculty meetings, and entering grades into the online grade book as examples.

All of the new teacher mentors had participated in mentoring another person at some point in their professional experience. Brad was the only mentor who had not mentored a new teacher, but cited experience of mentoring new employees in the banking industry. Sydney had the most experience of mentoring new teachers and commented about the importance of collaboration and learning from one another. Vicki, Jennifer, and Grant acknowledged in their responses the benefit of learning new strategies and keeping current on educational theory through the mentoring process. The three also discussed their roles as working with the new teachers on becoming more comfortable in the classroom through increasing their capacity in classroom management, methods of instructions, and learning about the curriculum standards.

**Perceptions and expectations.** When asked about what qualities they thought were important to have as a mentor, three aspects were shared by all of the mentor participants. All stated that a mentor must have patience in order to be a successful mentor. All stated that a mentor must be open-minded when working with new teachers. Finally, all stated that a mentor needs to be experienced so they are able to have background knowledge to draw upon when faced with questions from their mentee. All of them, with the exception of Brad, mentioned the need to be instructionally strong to serve as an example for the new teacher.

Through their responses, the mentor participants showed consensus in their role in the mentee–mentor relationship. The common theme among all of their responses was that they were to serve as an available support structure. Sydney commented that she wanted to help give Kenny, her new teacher mentee, the “attitude and skills to be successful as a teacher.”

The mentors all had high expectations for their mentee regarding the mentee–mentor relationship. Jennifer specifically addressed the idea of professionalism and presentation, stating that she expected her mentee to wear “professional attire.” Vicki was adamant that John be “open to constructive criticism.” All of the mentors stated that they expected their mentees to meet with them on a regular basis. The frequency expectations varied. Grant, Sydney, and Jennifer all stated that they expected a weekly meeting with their mentee. Vickie wanted to meet with her mentee every couple of weeks, and Brad was unsure about the frequency at which he expected to meet with his mentee.

**Professional growth.** Finally, through this first interview, the mentor teachers were able to discuss their own development and how this mentoring experience fitted into that. Vicki stated she was participating in a number of “book studies” that year and hoped to get John to participate in at least one with her. She also hoped to learn from her observations of John in the classroom. Jennifer, Grant, and Brad expected to learn some new instructional practices from their mentees. Sydney spoke the most about learning new pedagogy and theory from her mentee Kenny.

Although I have continued to take classes on numerous subjects, my training was obviously decades ago. I learn daily from younger teachers who have different ways of presenting material. It is very interesting to see how the curriculums are changing and developing. This year working with Kenny, I am hoping to improve my computer skills and use of technology in the classroom.

**Summary.** Through their own experiences in the classroom, each of the mentors understood the importance of providing support to new teachers, especially during their first year. Throughout the initial set of interviews with the mentor participants, it was clear that they viewed their role as providing a support structure to the new teacher mentees. Each had a somewhat different approach to the mentoring process; however, seeing themselves as a means of support was the central theme. Collaboration was another theme that stood out in this set of interviews. All of the mentors viewed

this relationship as one in which they worked together with the new teacher to improve both parties' ability to be successful in the classroom.

### **Initial Interview: Mentees**

The questions used to guide the initial mentee interview were very similar, but the perspective was different. These questions, like the ones posed to the mentors, were designed to gain an understanding of the expectations, and they applied to the same three key elements of the research questions. Other than student teaching experience gained by three of the participants, these were the first experiences of serving as a classroom teacher in which they were expected to function independently. It was important to understand how the new teachers were expecting the relationship with their mentors to provide much-needed support and to grow over time.

The set of guiding questions (see Appendix-O) allowed for the mentee participant to discuss their experience, what they felt were important aspects in the mentee–mentor relationship, and enabled a discussion regarding their expectations for their relationship with their mentor. These questions addressed key aspects of the research questions. First, by understanding their expectations for the relationship, we can examine what the mentee participants feel are important aspects of the mentee–mentor relationship and what role they hope this relationship will play in their overall professional development as a new teacher. Through the mentee participants' previous experience and expectations, inferences can be made about what structures need to be in place to promote collaboration among the participants.

**Previous experience.** Using the same format as the mentor interviews, the mentee participants were asked about their previous experiences prior to teaching. Both Megan and Katie were recent college graduates and did not have much professional experience. Megan had worked in a sandwich shop during college and Katie worked in the campus library as part of a work-study program. Kenny received his teacher certification through a master's program. This was Kenny's



second master's degree. His first master's degree was a Master's in Divinity. While completing his degree, he worked on campus as a residence hall director and chaplain. Both John and Scott changed careers when becoming teachers. John was in management with a large retailer and Scott was a practicing attorney working in a firm that represented a large software company. Scott commented on his previous experience and how it related to his current teaching assignment.

My previous experience as an attorney actually led me to my current position as a teacher. East End High School went to an academy structure and one of the academies was law themed. I am actually able to use my legal experience and training to teach the law courses here. I love teaching legal principles to high school students.

When asked about whether or not the mentee participants had been involved in any previous formal mentoring relationships, Megan, Kenny, and Katie all noted that they had a supervising teacher for their student teacher portion of their teacher preparation programs. Each of them considered this person a formal mentor. Kenny also discussed his relationships associated with his Christian faith, both as a mentor and mentee.

Working in a college residence hall as a director and chaplain, I had the opportunity to mentor college students. This was more of an informal relationship, passing on advice, providing some guidance, and joining them in prayer.

John and Scott both stated that they could not recall any formal relationships. John noted that he had had past managers that had helped guide his career and provide support for growth. Scott said he had no formal mentors in the legal field but learned from working with others on cases handled by the firm.

**Perceptions and expectations.** The mentee participants were asked what they thought were characteristics of a good mentor. There were some consistent themes that arose through their responses. All of the participants felt that a mentor must be experienced. John specifically noted

the need for a mentor to be “strong instructionally.” All of the participants stated that a mentor should be a good listener. Each of the participants also stated that a mentor should be able to provide feedback. Megan referred to this feedback as “constructive criticism.” Scott specifically addressed the idea that a mentor should be an “effective communicator.” He went on to discuss the idea of a mentor providing structure to the relationship.

I think a mentor should provide a solid structure to the relationship. Being new to teaching, I am a little unsure of what this structure should look like. I think it should include regular meetings, observations, and a mechanism to provide feedback. I want to really use my mentor as a means to make me a better teacher and am really looking for feedback, both good and bad.

The mentee participants were asked about their perception of their role in the mentee–mentor relationship. All of the participants expressed the view that their role was to actively ask questions and seek assistance from their mentor. Kenny said he must “ask questions and be observant” of his mentor Sydney. Scott said he must “continually seek advice” from his mentor Grant. John, Megan, and Katie each made similar comments. Each of the participants also mentioned collaboration in discussing their role. Megan specifically talked about collaborating with her mentor Jennifer with respect to the use of technology in the classroom. Kenny commented that he needs to be “willing to share things I have learned and experienced.” Katie specifically discussed her hopes to collaborate with her mentor Brad.

I really hope I am able to develop some lessons I can co-teach with my mentor. In my discussions with Brad so far, he has a lot of great ideas that I think fit well with some of the things I want to accomplish in my classes this year. I actually have mentioned some ideas that he said he would like to try in his classes.

The mentees all see their role as active participants in the mentee–mentor relationship and believe they share a responsibility to ensure it is successful. All of the participants discussed listening and incorporating ideas presented by their mentors. Each of the participants expressed that they would give their mentors honest appraisals of how their experience was going. Open communication was a central theme among all the participants. Scott discussed open communication and its role in the success of his relationship with Grant.

Successful participation will hinge on maintaining open communication with my mentor, following the advice of my mentor, and taking time to actually process the information my mentor shares and incorporate that into my instructional strategy, and not just expect that I will improve as a professional without investment into time and planning.

The mentors, in the eyes of the mentees, have to provide opportunities for collaboration, reflections, and provide examples in order to be a successful part of the mentee–mentor relationship. First, regarding collaboration, the mentees each mentioned in their interview that they believed the mentors would need to work with them in planning lessons. Megan stated she would need help planning lessons with “unfamiliar topics” and have some opportunities to “co-teach” with Jennifer, her mentor. Scott referred back to a previous statement and discussed the need to collaborate with Grant on transforming complex legal concepts into student-friendly lessons.

The need to be reflective in their practice was common among each of the participants. The need for the mentor to observe classes and provide feedback was consistent among mentee participants. John stated he needed Vicki to “watch me teach and provide some feedback of what she saw.” Kenny said he needed Sydney to watch him work one-on-one with students and provide him with feedback on how he could better support the regular education teachers he collaborates with.

I teach inclusion classes so I am in classes with different teachers throughout the day. I need Sydney to shadow me, see how I interact with my students and the other teachers so she can provide feedback that I can reflect back on to help me improve.

Providing examples was important to the mentee participants. They each commented on how they needed to see examples of student work and watch the mentor deliver a lesson. Katie stated she wanted to “see what Brad does in his classroom” so that she could get some ideas for her classes. Kenny commented that he would like to see some examples of how Sydney modified assignments to meet the needs of her special education students.

The mentee participants were asked how they planned on expressing their needs to their mentors. Overwhelmingly, each thought they hoped the relationship would be such that they could just go to their mentor, and express their concerns and seek advice. An open line of communication was seen as important by each of the participants. Scott commented that he hoped he could just “pop in” to see Grant if he had a question. Megan said she planned on “communicating openly and honestly” with Jennifer to ensure her needs were known.

**Professional growth.** There were some common threads among the participants when they discussed what they hoped to learn from the mentor teacher during the school year. With all of the participants, one common thread was learning how to put theory into practice through effective instructional strategies. John, Megan, and Katie were interested in learning the means to present the curriculum in ways to meet the needs of the various learning styles. John stated, “I really want to ensure I am able to differentiate to meet the needs of my students.” Scott was hoping to learn from his mentor, Grant, various ways to break down some complex legal concepts and put them into “teenage-friendly” terms.

Classroom management was another area in which the mentee participants hoped to gain insight from their teacher mentor. Megan and Katie both showed some apprehension about

managing a classroom full of high school students. Megan commented on the need to learn some management techniques from her mentor.

I really want to work on my classroom management skills with my mentor. It is what I struggled most with during my student teaching. I find it most difficult for me to keep my eye on everything that is going on in the class and remaining consistent in addressing bad behaviors. It was obvious with some of the kids when they were up to something they should not be doing but not so obvious with others. I want to make sure I am consistent.

There were a few outlying items that came up when discussing what the new teachers hoped to learn from their mentor. One participant, John, discussed administrative type items, specifically mentioning how to order supplies. Both Scott and John were concerned with school policy issues such as attendance and discipline. Katie mentioned she wanted some guidance on parent conferences, specifically dealing with angry parents.

**Summary.** It was clear from the initial interview that there were some common expectations among the mentees and mentors. Communication was a constant theme, and the value of being open and honest seemed to be a cornerstone of this. One commonality among the mentors was that they viewed themselves as a support structure and this idea was shared by the mentees. Due to their varied experiences, the mentees had somewhat different needs, but shared instructional strategies and classroom management as common areas of focus. Finally, the idea of collaboration was consistent among the participants. It is clear that they want to learn from each other and work together to improve the educational experience of the students they serve.

## **Second Interview: Mentors**

The second interviews were administered at the end of the first semester and participants had been working together for approximately five months. The questions (see Appendix-P) were designed to gain a better understanding of the types of activities the mentor and mentee were

participating in, and to gain a perspective regarding their perception of the current status of the relationship. This examination of what types of activities the mentee–mentor pairs were participating in allows for an analysis of the relationship that addresses both research question number one—what role does this play in the participants’ professional development—and research question two—the elements required for a successful relationship. The questions also allowed for the participants to discuss if they viewed the relationship as one sided or collaborative. Question four specifically addresses this aspect of the research, and allowed the participants the ability to elaborate on why they felt one way or the other regarding the collaborative nature of the relationship.

**Activities within the relationship.** The first question of the second interview gave the mentors an opportunity to reflect on what types of activities they had been doing with their mentee up until that point in the school year. Each of the mentors commented that they were having regular meetings with their mentees. Vicki reported that she was meeting with John on a weekly basis. Sydney reported she was meeting with Kenny weekly as well, unless either had a special education-related meeting, in which case they would meet more than once a week. Brad said he was meeting with Katie bi-weekly and noted their classroom placements hindered their ability to meet.

East End High School is a very large complex. My classroom is a portable in the backfield of the school and Katie’s classroom is in the main building above the office. It’s a ten-minute walk with a brisk pace to get to her room. This makes it hard to meet sometimes.

Grant’s response alluded to the size of the campus, but he actually used this to his advantage with Scott. Both of their classrooms were in a cluster of portables in the far back area of the school. Both also shared a planning period, and Grant and Scott used this time to take a walk to the front office area to make copies and retrieve their mail. The walk gave them time to chat about what was happening in their classes. Grant stated, “We make a daily walk to the office together and chat about classes, lessons, and students. It’s a good opportunity to just touch base on a daily basis.”

Jennifer also said she met with Megan on a daily basis, during lunch. She commented that these were informal meetings and allowed for more “socializing” so she could get to know her mentee better.

Each one of the mentor participants also stated that they had completed observations of their mentees while teaching lessons. Vicki and Sydney both reported that they had observed their mentees twice a month since school had begun. Grant stated he had observed Scott four times since school started. Jennifer had also completed four observations of her mentee. Brad had completed the least number of observations of the mentors at that point with three observations. All of the mentors stated that there was a meeting after the observation to discuss what they had seen. Grant and Jennifer also reported that they had had meetings before the observations to discuss the lesson and see what the mentee wanted them to look for. Jennifer commented, “Several times we have planned lessons together and then went back and critiqued them.”

Three mentors—Jennifer, Sydney, and Grant—discussed planning lessons together. Each of these mentors shared the same subject area as their mentee. Sydney also noted that she had worked very closely with Kenny writing several Individual Education Plans (IEPs), as he was unsure about the process near the beginning of the year. Brad attended a parent–teacher conference with Katie. Vicki was more vague with her response and stated that she had an “open-door” policy with John and he could “come see her anytime he needed help with something.” Grant discussed how his relationship had developed outside of school because of a shared interest in running. The two trained together and ran 5K races on weekends.

When asked about which activities were most effective and which were least effective, the participants provided a mixed bag of responses. Each one had no real problem pointing out the most effective practices. All stated that meeting with their mentee was very effective because it gave them the time to reflect and ask questions. Each mentor, with the exception of Brad, commented that the observations were very important and it gave them an opportunity to provide

constructive feedback. With respect to the least effective activities, all but Sydney said they could not think of an activity that was least effective. Sydney did not really comment on an activity, but was more critical of herself.

Sometimes I find myself being critical of students, parents, and other teachers. I have to really watch this because I do not want Kenny turned off to the profession. I get frustrated sometimes with what seems like a dysfunctional special education department. I am comfortable with Kenny and sometimes I vent too much.

**Professional growth.** In question three, the mentor was able to discuss what they had learned from this experience up to that point. The common theme among each of the mentors was that it promoted reflection in their own practice. Grant stated, “I continually refresh my lessons and tweak how I present content based on our discussions.” Jennifer discussed how she had been able to take a “fresh approach” to some of her lessons after some of the discussions and observations with Megan. Sydney commented that she had picked up some additional websites from Kenny that she could use in class. Brad reported that he had used some strategies he learned from Katie after observing one of her lessons.

Katie used this four corners exercise to get students familiar with adding captions to photos. I really liked how the students rotated around the room from station to station. It was great instructionally and because the students kept moving, it was a really nice management tool as well. I have done something very similar now and have had success with it.

A sense of excitement came across most of the mentors when they were talking about what they had learned through this process up until this point. Vicki mentioned specifically that this experience had re-energized her teaching and renewed her sense of focus.

It has been great observing his [John’s] teaching style. It has energized my teaching and renewed my interest in the profession. It’s been interesting talking with him about the



education classes he has taken this semester as a part of his certification program. It is nice seeing the new educational theory and techniques coming out of the universities.

**Relationship perceptions.** When asked about whether they characterized their relationship as one sided or collaborative, the essence of research question three and how the relationship changes from a one-sided to a two-way collaboration started to take shape. Each of the mentors characterized the relationship with their mentee as collaborative. Within their response, there were three factors that had the most influence on why the relationship was collaborative: comfort with their mentee, mutual respect, and trust. Sydney commented that Kenny and she were both “comfortable in their skin” and that this facilitated honesty, which led to trust. Vicki stated that at first the relationship was more one sided but “as the trust began to grow,” the collaboration increased. Jennifer also stated that as the trust and comfort level grew, the collaboration increased. Grant commented that he respected Scott for his past accomplishments as an attorney. Due to the personal aspect of their relationship outside of school, Grant also stated that he was very comfortable with Scott and trusted him. Brad, although characterizing the relationship as collaborative, elaborated less on the factors that aided this type of relationship to occur and more on the obstacles that kept it from further expanding.

It has been very difficult to find the time to meet with Katie. I believe we collaborate well when we do meet but because we do not share a planning period, it is very difficult to find the time to get together on a regular basis. If we got together more often, I think we would both benefit from the interaction.

The correlating factor that leads to the increase in comfort, trust, and respect, which ultimately led to the collaborative nature of the relationship, was time spent with their mentee. Vicki, Jennifer, Sydney, and Grant all responded that because they had been able to spend a substantial time with their mentee, they had been able to get to know them as individuals and their relationships had benefitted from this.

When questioned about what difficulties they had found within the relationship, Jennifer, Sydney, and Grant reported that there was nothing that they had found difficult about the relationship with their mentee. Vicki stated, “It was hard for me not to take over when a lesson was not going well.” Brad commented again about the distance between their classrooms and the lack of a common planning period. He said this made it difficult to meet. He went on to state that he would be making more of an effort during the second half of the year to meet more frequently.

**Moving forward and reflection.** In retrospect, question six should have been the final one of the interview. It was designed to have the mentors look forward to the remainder of the year and express their hopes and goals for the relationship. Each of the participants expressed that they wanted to see their mentees continue to be successful and grow professionally. A follow-up question was inserted concerning what the mentor hoped to gain from the remainder of the year. Vicki stated that she was looking forward to more collaboration and discussed doing a cross-curricular unit with John. Grant also wanted to collaborate more with Scott in the hope of learning more about the legal system and government—two concepts that would help him in his social studies course. Sydney commented that she would like to spend more time planning with Kenny, especially creating lesson plans that utilized instructional technology. Jennifer hoped to continue her observations so she could continue to see some “fresh ways to present the material.” Brad stated that he wanted to work harder at being more available. He believed that through this availability, he could increase the reflection on his own practice.

I need to meet with Katie more often. The conversations we have are rich and during my observations I always pick up a new trick for myself to use in class. If I can increase my meetings and interactions with her, I can pick up more strategies for myself and provide her greater support in the process.

The second interview for mentors was completed with a two-part question discussing “light bulb” moments seen in their mentee and within themselves. A light bulb moment is one in which

someone has something click with them and they really understand a concept. Vicki stated that she had seen some light bulb moments with John when dealing with classroom management. Vicki said her light bulb moment was “realizing I am not making another me but helping John develop his own instruction practices.” Jennifer noted that Megan would have light bulb moments during observations. Jennifer stated, “You could see when Megan understood whether a lesson was going good or bad.” Jennifer commented that she had a light bulb moment when she witnessed Megan handle a difficult student skillfully. Sydney said that Kenny’s light bulb moment came early in the year when he quickly realized that his groups of students required many different strategies to meet their needs. Sydney’s light bulb moment for herself came through reflection.

I am a reflective person and a workaholic. I also tend to be very linear. It was really nice watching someone who does the job but accomplishes some of the same results in a different manner. I was observing Kenny when a student started acting up. Kenny showed a lot of patience and really handled the situation well. I think I handle situations similar to that well but I realized there are some other ways that could be equally as beneficial to the student.

**Summary.** The second interview with the mentors exposed how the relationship was developing over time. Key activities such as meetings, classroom observations, and planning allowed the mentors to spend substantial time with their mentees. This time spent together led to the mentor becoming comfortable with their mentee, respecting them, and ultimately developing a trust in them. With Grant and Jennifer, the relationship extended beyond school and had personal aspects that had facilitated additional strength in comfort with one another, respect, and trust. The characteristics of comfort, respect, and trust had led all of the mentors to characterize their relationship as collaborative.

## **Second Interview: Mentees**

Much like the first interview, the mentee questions (see Appendix-P) for the second interview were similar to those of the mentor but were modified to gain perspective. As with the mentor questions for this interview, question four specifically examines the perception of the mentee in regards to the collaborative aspect of the relationship. Concerning the role of mentoring in the mentee's overall professional development, the questions provided a means to elaborate on what types of activities were being conducted, and their perception of the effectiveness of these activities. The questions promoted reflection on the relationship at the approximate mid-point of the year and provided feedback on how the participants wanted to move forward to further develop ties with their mentor.

**Activities within the relationship.** Question one addressed the activities the mentee had been involved in within their relationship with their mentor. The mentees' responses mirrored their mentor counterpart when discussing these activities. John and Kenny both reported meeting with their mentors on a weekly basis. Kenny stated that he had met with Sydney formally once a week but also said that he had touched base with her when he was holding a student's case meeting.

I meet with Sydney once a week, usually on Wednesdays after school, but I do touch base with her if I have a difficult case meeting coming up on a student. I have struggled a bit this year with IEPs and making sure I have all the info needed for them. It's nice to review my plans with Sydney before a meeting or sometimes showing her the draft IEP so I can get some feedback.

Scott and Megan both discussed how they met with their mentors on a daily basis, either formally or informally. Scott said, "We take a walk to the main office each day. It's a great time for us to discuss what's going on in my class." Megan discussed her lunch meetings with Jennifer. Katie stated that she usually met with Brad bi-weekly, but noted that there were several times that there could have been three weeks or more between meetings.

We agreed to meet at least once every two weeks at the beginning of the school year. There have been several occasions when we have missed a meeting and went three or four weeks without a formal meeting. I do email him if I have a question about something but we are on opposite ends of the building and we do not share a planning period. This makes it hard to get together.

Classroom observations were an activity that each of the mentee participants discussed. Kenny and John said that they were usually observed by their mentors twice a month. Both spoke very positively about the type of feedback that they got from these observations from their mentors. Scott and Megan both stated they had been observed four times by their mentors. Katie said she had been observed by Brad three times. Katie did comment about how Brad had assisted her with some difficult parents.

Brad actually sat in on a parent conference with me. I had some difficult parents that were upset because I had given their son a zero for plagiarism. He did not really have to say much but it was nice knowing he was there. We actually debriefed afterwards and he gave me some pointers I can use going forward.

Megan, Scott, and Kenny all reported that they planned lessons with their mentors. Megan commented, "Jennifer taught the class I am teaching last year so she had some great ideas on what to do with the class." Kenny noted that Sydney had worked with many of the teachers he was working with and was able to help him adapt some of the assignments to meet the needs of his students.

Question two asked the mentees to evaluate the benefits associated with the activities they were involved in with their mentors. Much like the mentors, it was easy to discuss the benefits of the activities, but it was difficult for them to be critical. Each of the mentees noted that the observations and follow up after them were very beneficial. Kenny, Scott, and Megan each

commented that it was nice that their mentors were familiar with their subject areas. Kenny stated that Sydney's willingness to share experiences with him had really helped his development.

Sydney's experiences are the most beneficial part of this relationship for me. Her stories relate directly to what I am experiencing in the classroom. Sometimes I really get a kick out of her stories. Many times they are funny but really sort of hit home for me.

Katie was the only participant that could really point out a negative when discussing activities. It was not a negative dealing directly with an activity, but dealt more with the circumstances around the relationship.

It is difficult to find time to meet with Brad. We are really far apart within the building and this adds to the problem. It would be nice if he were closer so I could just pop in to see him sometime. We don't share a planning period either so we are never off at the same time. That is the most difficult part of the relationship so far.

**Professional growth.** The mentee participants were given a chance to reflect on the relationship at that point and how it had helped them in their professional practice. Megan and John both commented that the relationship had aided them to be more confident in their abilities within the classroom. Kenny reported that he had learned through his interactions with Sydney the importance of communication with parents and how to help empower students to take control of their own success. Katie also alluded to the parent conference previously discussed and stated that she had learned that communication with parents was important: "Brad has helped me with my communications with parents." Scott, John, and Kenny each specifically mentioned that their interactions with their mentor had given them a sense of how collaboration could be a powerful tool in their growth as teachers.

Mentee participants were asked to identify experiences with their mentor that they recognized as important toward their development as an educator. This required them to think not

only of the mechanics of the action, but how it related to them for long-term success. Each participant believed that they had learned from the conversations with their mentors, particularly following observations. John said, “it was nice having Vicki in my class every couple of weeks. She always had some great advice after those visits.” Megan discussed the lessons she was able to observe her mentor deliver.

It is always nice having Jennifer come into my class, observe, and debrief with me. What was really cool was being able to go into Jennifer’s class and watch her deliver a lesson. It was really nice to have some instructional strategies modeled for me in an actual classroom setting. I am going to try and see if I can observe some other teachers as well this semester.

Scott said it was important for him to have a “critical friend” he could go to if he needed advice. Kenny commented that it was nice observing Sydney and the way she interacted with parents. Kenny acknowledged this as an important part of special education.

I have also enjoyed observing Sydney interact with families. The relationship with families is paramount for a successful program (referring to special education). When parents are well informed and respected, they typically are excited to collaborate with the special educator to determine what is best for their child.

**Relationship perceptions.** Specifically addressing research question three, guiding question four of the interview asked the mentee participants if they felt their relationship with their mentor was one sided or collaborative. Each one of the mentees responded that they considered their relationship as collaborative. Scott and Megan both attributed their “close” relationship with their mentors to the expansion of their relationships outside of the educational realm. Scott commented about his running with Grant being a common interest that had benefited their professional relationship.

Grant and I now run together on the weekends, training and participating in races. I definitely trust him and am very comfortable with him. This has carried over into the professional arena. I truly believe I can go to him with any issues I have and I think he feels like he can talk to me as well.

John feels his relationship with Vicki is collaborative. He commented on how he thought the relationship had progressed.

Over time our relationship has grown. At first I really wanted to concentrate on listening. Then as time went on, I felt more comfortable with sharing my ideas. Now we discuss with each other how we would handle certain situations, present lessons, etcetera. I think she has even taken some of the strategies I use in class and incorporated them into her own.

Kenny also felt that his relationship with Sydney was collaborative. He commented that they “bounce ideas off each other all the time.” Kenny also believed that Sydney “values his opinion” and he attributed this to a mutual trust in one another. Trust was mentioned by each of the participants with the exception of Katie.

When followed up with a question as to how this collaboration between the mentee participants and their mentor developed, the same three factors that the mentors recognized surfaced with the mentees. John, Megan, Kenny, and Scott each said that over time they had become comfortable with their mentors. The same four stated that they trusted their mentors. Kenny, Megan, and Scott specifically mentioned that they respected their mentors.

The mentees were questioned about what aspects they felt were difficult in their mentee–mentor relationships. The only participant that gave a response in the negative was Katie. As she had previously mentioned, she would have liked to have seen her mentor in closer proximity to her so she could “pop in” and see Brad more often. Each of the other four mentees did not comment on a difficult aspect of the relationship.



As with the mentors, the mentees were asked how they hoped the relationship would progress for the remainder of the year. John, Megan, and Kenny all stated that they hoped the relationship would continue to be collaborative in nature. Scott hoped that he and Grant would grow professionally, but he also hoped to increase the amount of running the two did together. Katie stated she wanted to make more of an effort to meet and “collaborate” with Brad this semester. Katie felt they both needed to put more effort into the relationship.

With the video announcements, the school newspaper, and the yearbook, it is hard to find the time to meet with Brad. I know he is extremely busy this time of year too coaching basketball. It is my hope this semester that I make the time to meet with him more often. When I have met with him, it has been very productive and I think increasing this the last half of the year will help me end the year strong.

**Summary.** Many of the same themes presented themselves during the second interview with the mentees as they did with the mentors. The mentees discussed the same activities of meetings and observations as being important activities to their development as teachers. Each of the mentees characterized the relationship as collaborative. In respects to this collaboration, the same three factors that facilitated this process surfaced. Being comfortable with their mentor, trusting their mentor, and mutual respect all came through as strong factors for collaboration. From the mentees’ responses, some issues that hindered the relationship were the lack of commonality of subject areas between the mentee and mentor, and engagement time between the two parties. Both factors seemed to have an effect on the perceived strength of the relationship.

### **Final Interview: Mentors**

The final interview of the mentor and mentee participants was held close to the end of the school year in the first week of May, during the fourth quarter. The guiding questions (see Appendix-Q) in this interview were designed to promote reflection about the mentee–mentor

relationship. The mentors and mentees were given the opportunity to reflect on what aspects they felt were important in the success of their relationship, which specifically addresses research question number two. The reflection also allowed the participants to discuss the aspects of the relationship that helped ensure it was collaborative in nature, which addresses research question number three. Keeping with the previous formats, the questions were very similar between the two sets of participants with the key differences lying in the perspective sought.

The participants were given an opportunity to reflect on what aspects of the relationship they felt were rewarding. The mentors and mentees were also given the opportunity to reflect on what aspects of the relationship they felt were difficult. Mentors and mentees were also given an opportunity to discuss mentoring options in the future. Mentors were asked if they would choose to mentor another new teacher in the future, and mentees were asked if they would consider mentoring a new teacher in the future. The questions also promoted thought and reflection about how the process could change and provide better support. The questions allowed both the mentor and mentee to reflect on lessons learned from the relationship. This is particularly important for the mentor because there has been little research conducted that examines the benefits gained by the mentor through the mentoring process. The responses provided feedback that addressed all three research questions.

**Relationship perceptions.** Question one of the final interview with the mentor participants asked them what they thought was the most rewarding part of the relationship. During their responses, each one of the mentors discussed to some degree the idea of witnessing the professional growth in their mentees over the previous school year. Sydney discussed the difference she saw in Kenny as the year progressed.

I have found it rewarding to see Kenny understand that teaching special students requires more than just a lesson plan. He has grown to be become more patient when a lesson is not

working. He has also increased in awareness of the role of the family in a child's success. I think he has gained insight into how much family dynamics impact a student's progress.

Vicki, Jennifer, Grant, and Brad all noted that they really thought the insight that they gained into their own teaching through the work they had done with their mentee that year was very rewarding. Vicki commented, "I have learned so much from John this year that I have transferred to my own teaching." Jennifer said, "It was really nice to work with someone who brings so much to the table." Grant stated that he enjoyed the "collegiality" he shared with Scott. Brad was excited about the insight he had gained from Megan, especially during the second half of the year.

We made it a priority to meet at least once a week. We have actually made it a habit to grab a coffee near school on Thursday afternoons. These discussions have been great. They are in a casual setting away from school. I have really learned a lot by talking with Megan about what is going on in her classroom. Through providing her advice, it really has reinforced my own efforts as a teacher.

The mentors were then given an opportunity to reflect about what they thought the most difficult part of the relationship was. As before, it was difficult to have the mentors be critical of the process. There was one very common thread among each of the mentors: time. Vicki, Jennifer, Grant, and Brad all reported that it was difficult to find the time to meet and conduct observations. Vicki said, "It was sometimes hard to find the time to meet because of everything else going on in school." Grant stated, "It was harder at certain parts of the year to get time to observe Scott, especially around FCAT (standardized test) season." Brad had the most difficulty in finding time to meet with Katie.

It was so hard to find the time, between the distance and the lack of common planning, to meet with Katie on a regular basis. It was not really until the second half of the year when we decided to meet at a place we both like, Starbucks, that meetings became more regular.

Sydney found it difficult to accept Kenny's work ethic. Sydney noted that she was very intense and Kenny was far more "laid back" than she was. Jennifer sometimes felt it was difficult to ensure that she did not "step on Megan's toes" with some of her observations and debriefs.

**Factors for success.** When asked about what factors they felt were important to ensuring the mentee–mentor relationship was successful, four themes emerged from the responses: openness of the participants, collaboration, communication, and continuity. Each of the participants all commented that it was important that their mentees were open to constructive feedback and new information. Each also discussed the idea that they as mentors must also be open to new ideas and strategies. Grant said, "It is important that I am willing to listen to Scott and his ideas. I have learned a lot from him by listening."

Each of the participants also commented that it was important that the relationship be collaborative. Each of the participants said that their relationship with their mentee was collaborative in nature and believed this led to success. Sydney stated, "There must be collaboration, and both people must feel they bring something of value to the process."

Communication was another theme shared by the mentor participants. Jennifer commented that "open communication is important but not always easy." Grant really saw a value in communication as a tool for success in the relationship.

Having an open dialogue with Scott has been so important in his growth and mine. He has been able to articulate his needs and I think equally as important, I have been able to communicate an openness to serve as a support structure. This has helped us grow as colleagues and as friends.

Continuity in the process was another aspect identified as important in ensuring the mentee–mentor relationship is successful. Vicki identified this continuity as "ensuring that you meet and conduct observations on a regular basis." Brad also saw the value of meeting on a regular basis and

commented, “After we increased our frequency in meeting, the relationship really started to thrive.” Grant stated his consistent dialogue with Scott “affected the relationship positively.”

Question four allowed the participants to reflect on what they would do differently if they chose to mentor another new teacher in the future. Overwhelmingly, the responses centered on the idea of setting expectations. This idea of setting expectations applied both to what the mentor wanted and what the mentee needed from the relationship. Sydney said, “I will probably discuss my expectations better and set some timelines.” Brad stated, “I need to really make sure I understand the needs of my mentee and they understand my expectations for them.” Jennifer commented, “I need to make sure to discuss the expectations for both sides and address them when they are not being met.”

**Administrative support.** Question five addressed the role that school administrators can help play in facilitating the process. There were several common themes that became evident through the responses. Brad stated it would be beneficial if administrators could structure more time for mentors and mentees to meet within their duty days.

It would have been so much better for Katie and I if we had shared a planning period. This would have helped facilitate a regular meeting time. It would have also given us an opportunity to possibly plan a cross-curricular lesson of some sort so that we would have had a chance to do some team teaching with one another.

Vicki also commented about the need to have a common planning period with her mentor.

John and I did not share a common prep. This would have been great because it would have given us more time to meet and work with each other. There were times in which it was really hard to find the time to see each other on a weekly basis. We made it work, but having the same planning period would have helped.

Sydney and Grant both believed that administrators could be more involved in the process. Sydney mentioned that “administrators should meet with the pair to see how things are going.” Grant also believed that administrators could take a more active role in the process by “meeting at least once each quarter to see how things are going.”

Vicki, Sydney, and Brad each believed more thought should be given to the mentee–mentor pairings. Sydney believed that “much thought” should be given to this process. Vicki and Brad felt that mentors and mentees should teach the same subject area. Vicki commented, “It would have been much easier to plan together if we taught the same subject.” Brad stated, “I think I could have been more helpful with content delivery if I understood the subject better. If Megan had been a social studies teacher or I would have taught journalism, it would have been easier.”

**Professional growth.** Question six asked the mentors what they perceived to be the most important lesson that was learned. Vicki, Sydney, Grant, and Brad each commented that they had learned the importance of collaboration in the growth of the mentee and in themselves. Sydney called this relationship a “two-way street” and Grant said, “Through working with Scott, I have become a better teacher.” Each of the mentors also said having patience was an important lesson learned. Jennifer commented, “Patience is important and it goes a long way.”

Finally, the mentors were asked about what their hopes for the mentees were going forward. Each of the mentors wished their mentees success throughout their career. Grant and Jennifer both had hopes to continue both their professional and personal relationships with their mentees. Grant said, “I have really enjoyed working with Scott this year and hope to continue being his colleague and friend for years to come.”

**Summary.** The final interview gave the mentors a voice of reflection over the process and hopes for improvement. Four themes emerged as important aspects of the relationship: openness of the participants, collaboration, communication, and continuity. Finding time to devote to the

relationship was a consistent issue among each of the participants, and was noted as an area in which the school administration could provide more support. It was evident through the interviews that the mentors have valued the relationship and learned that patience was not only important when you were working with students but was also critical when working with adult learners.

#### Final Interview: Mentees

As with the previous two interviews, the mentee questions (see Appendix-Q) were very similar to the mentor questions. The focus was reflection from the perspective of the mentees. A key difference is with question number seven. This question provides an opportunity to reflect on how having a mentor had shaped them as a teacher and poses the question as to whether all new teachers need a mentor.

**Relationship perceptions.** The final interview for the mentees began with the same guiding questions the mentors received in their final interview. It asked the mentee participants to reflect on what they thought the most rewarding part of the relationship was. The responses were not as consistent as the mentor responses were. There was one consistent theme among the mentee participants: open communication. Each one of the mentee participants discussed in their responses how they valued the discussions they had with their mentors. Kenny commented about Sydney's willingness to share her ideas to ensure a special education program was successful.

My mentor is very willing and open to sharing her thoughts on what can make a program successful and how she sees need for change. The most rewarding part of my relationship is my mentor's willingness to always share what is on her mind.

John thought the most rewarding part for him was having someone who he could "honestly talk to and trust." John spoke about how enjoyed sharing ideas with this mentor Vicki. John specifically noted that he enjoyed the reflection with Vicki after she conducted classroom observations.

Katie and Scott's responses also included elements of communication. Scott commented that Grant was "always there if I needed to talk." Katie stated that communication was an important aspect of her relationship with Brad and noted that it had really improved the second half of the year.

I think we got off to a slow start. In looking back, it was my fault just as much as it was Brad's fault. After we really made a commitment to meet on a regular basis, I really started getting a lot out of our conversations. I felt I could be completely comfortable communicating my struggles and needs to Brad. I really saw us as having an open dialogue. You just have to make the time to establish that.

All of the participants discussed, in their responses to the first question, how they appreciated how much they had been able to learn from their mentors. Megan, like the other mentees, acknowledged open communication as being an important aspect of the relationship; however, she focused her response on the appreciation she had for Jennifer because of what she had learned. Megan specifically mentioned how she appreciated learning how to be the "most effective teacher possible" and "how to get students engaged."

The second guiding question mirrored what was asked of the mentors. It asked the mentees about what they felt was the most difficult part of the relationship. A common thread among most of the mentee participants was time. John, Megan, and Katie each mentioned in their responses that time was a difficulty. John and Katie each felt it was difficult because they did not have a common planning period. Katie noted both her mentor and herself had struggled all year, especially during the first half, to find the time to meet with one another.

During the first half of the year, we just could not seem to find a regular time to get together. We had opposite planning periods and our classrooms seemed like they were miles away from each other. This made it difficult. The second half of the year, this improved because



we set up a time to meet outside of school. It would have been nice to share a planning period.

Kenny did not mention time as being an issue, but did comment that it was difficult sometimes to “understand his role” in the relationship. He struggled with when it was appropriate to offer ideas and suggestions. Scott could not think of a negative and said “I have made a lifelong friend in Grant.”

**Factors for success.** Question three allowed the mentees to reflect on what they thought were key factors to have in place for a successful mentee–mentor relationship. Again, there was one central theme shared by most of the mentees. John, Megan, Kenny, and Katie each emphasized the need for open communication with their mentor. John added, “to have open communication, there needs to be a sense of trust in place.”

There were a couple of other specific factors mentioned by the mentees. Scott said it was important to him to have a mentor that had a “similar outlook on life.” He felt if this similar outlook was not there, the two parties would “simply be going through the motions.” Although Kenny’s number one factor was open communication, he also made the point that the mentor “must be willing to be vulnerable.” He went on to comment that most of his learning took place when his mentor was willing “to be open about her successes and failures.”

The mentees were then asked if they chose to mentor in the future, how they would approach the relationship. This required the mentees to reflect on their own relationship with their mentor and discuss what they would do the same and what would they do differently. The idea of having open communication was consistent among the mentees’ responses. Each of the mentees thought that if they were serving in the capacity of a mentor to a new teacher in the future, they would ensure that there was open communication. John thought it was important to have a sense of trust so that the open communication could take place.

If I choose to mentor a new teacher in the future, I want to make sure we develop a sense of trust in one another. It is important to me that my mentee would feel as if I was a safe person to talk too. If that trust and comfort level is there, then we will be able to have an open dialogue with one another like the one I feel I have with Vicki. That is how the exchange of knowledge and learning will take place.

Scott was extremely complimentary of his mentor with his response. He stated that he would “model” Grant’s approach to the mentee–mentor relationship. Key factors he described were ensuring you were a support structure that was readily available, allowing the mentee to develop their own style, and being “open and honest within your interactions.”

**Administrative support.** Question five addressed the school administration and what type of support structure they could provide to ensure the relationship was successful. Providing sufficient time to facilitate the relationship was a consistent theme among most of the mentees. John, Katie, and Megan each stated that administration should ensure there was time for the mentors and mentees to meet during the school day. John and Katie both highlighted that they did not share a common planning period and this hindered their ability to meet. John said, “Vicki had planning the last period of the day while mine was the first period; this made it hard to meet.” Katie was consistent with her previous answers and stated, “Admin needs to make sure that mentors and mentees share the same prep period.”

John and Katie also believed that administration should ensure that the mentor and mentee taught the same subject area. John commented, “Although we both teach a remedial subject, they are not the same remedial subjects. This would have made planning easier.” Katie shared the same feeling, “There are some great things we can learn and incorporate in each other’s classes but they are still not the same subject matter.”

**Professional growth.** Question six allowed the mentees to reflect on what they thought were the most important lessons learned from this mentee–mentor experience. The response from the mentees primarily focused on their practice as teachers and how the mentors aided that. Kenny commented on how what he learned from Sydney about the special education systems and practices was important. Scott discussed how he was not an education student and learning about “how to plan” and “manage a classroom” were important lessons. Katie commented, “I figured out how to put theory into practice this year and my mentor really helped with that.” John echoed this thought with his response and stated that he “learned about the practice of teaching.”

Finally, the mentees were given the opportunity to reflect about how they felt this experience had influenced their teaching and if they felt all new teachers should have a mentor. Each of the participants all said they felt all new teachers should have a mentor. The common rationale shared by the mentees was the need for support. With regards to how this experience had influenced their teaching, the responses were mixed. Kenny commented that because of the experience of his mentor, he was able to gain a large amount of experience in a short time. He said, “The knowledge I have gained over this school year is something I could have only accomplished after years of personal experience.” John saw the interaction with Vicki as a means for growth and he hoped to continue learning from his peers.

I will always continue to seek educational guidance. I realized through this experience that I will always be able to grow through interactions with colleagues. It is important to collaborate with those you work with. Many times, there is a lot you can learn from the teacher in the next room.

**Summary.** It was clear from the final round of interviews that the mentees saw benefits for their professional practice facilitated through the mentee–mentor relationship. The mentee participants identified some common requirements that they felt ensured their relationship was successful. Collaboration and open communication were two consistent themes throughout the

interviews. The ideas of trust and having a strong comfort level with their mentors were important to promoting a collaborative relationship. The mentees believed that it was important to have the time available to meet and felt that the school administration should ensure this through common planning periods. Concerning pairing, it was obvious that those who had shared the same subject matter found it easier to collaborate than those who had not. Finally, those mentees who connected on a personal level with their mentors, specifically Scott and Megan, tended to show greater collaboration through their responses.

### **Focus Groups**

Focus group sessions were conducted separately with the mentors and mentees. Each group participated in two focus group sessions. The first set of focus group sessions took place at the end of January and the second group took place at the end of April. The focus groups were held separately between the mentors and mentees to promote candid responses from the participants. It also allowed for an exchange of ideas among like participants. Due to the proximity to the researcher, the focus groups were held online utilizing Google Chat. Participants were able to log in from their own computers and communicated with others via the Internet video-chat program. The guiding questions for the focus group sessions were designed to address each of the three research questions.

#### **First Focus Group Session: Mentors**

The first two focus groups were held in the last week of January after the conclusion of the first semester of school. The focus group format was semi-structured with the researcher serving as the moderator. The first focus group began with an opportunity for each participant to introduce themselves and provide a little background information. The moderator greeted the participants after everyone had logged into the chat. A thank you was given for their participation and then it was suggested to the mentor participants to share their name, the subject area they taught, how

many years they had been teaching, and for how long they had mentored new teachers. Each went around and shared this information with the group. All of the mentors were familiar with one another from their work in the school. Grant and Brad knew each other very well because they both taught in the same department. Grant and Jennifer seemed to know each other fairly well and made sure to say hello to one another when they logged on. From their interaction, it appeared that Sydney and Vicki knew each other fairly well.

After the initial introductions were completed, the moderator informed the participants that the focus groups were an opportunity for open dialogue about how their mentoring relationship was progressing. The moderator told the mentors that he would provide some questions to help guide the conversation, but if the participants wanted to share something, they were to feel free to express their feelings during the discussion. The participants were informed that they could “jump in” when they wanted to add something to the discussion, but were asked to please wait until the other person was finished speaking, and to keep comments respectful. The moderator informed the participants that the focus group meeting would last approximately one hour.

Having the mentors go around and introduce themselves not only provided an opportunity to learn more about one another, it also familiarized everyone with the lag times associated with the video-chat program. After the introductions, the first question was posed to the group of mentors. The question asked was “Why did you choose to mentor a new teacher this year?” It took about 20 seconds before anyone answered. Grant began speaking first and said, “When I mentored in the past, I was able to learn a lot from the new teachers. I really enjoy the interaction.” Brad then answered with, “I wanted to mentor because it was a new experience for me, and Katie is the first new teacher I have worked with.” Vicki also commented that she really “enjoyed the interaction” and liked to “learn from someone who brings in a fresh perspective.” Jennifer concurred with Vicki. Finally, Sydney spoke about how mentoring gave her a fresh perspective and renewed her teaching.

I have been teaching a long time and working with younger teachers always seems to give me some new perspective. The research has changed a lot since I started my teaching, especially in the area of special education. I look at mentoring new teachers as an opportunity to stay current on what the research says.

The group was then asked a second question with specific respect to research question one and the role mentoring plays in the professional development of a first-year teacher. Sydney was the first to respond. She stated, “I feel it is an important part. New teachers can learn a lot from veteran teachers.” Grant followed up and discussed his previous role at the county office.

A couple of years back, I had the opportunity to mentor new social studies teachers county wide. Central County has a new teacher-induction program but like many other programs, it is really underfunded and the structure could be beefed up. I see mentors as the front lines of professional development for a new teacher. Mentoring provides someone that is right there and available in real time when assistance is needed.

Brad agreed with Grant and went on to say, “I went through the new teacher-induction program here not too long ago and found that my mentor was the most important part of it for me.” Jennifer and Vicki did not comment on this question.

The mentors were then asked a question that was the root of research question two. “So most of you have mentored before, what do you think are important elements in a mentee–mentor relationship?” Grant and Jennifer both began to answer at the same time. Grant deferred to Jennifer. She stated, “I think there must be an open communication. I as the mentor must be willing to share my experiences and insight and the mentee must be in a position to share not only their successes but their failures as well.” Grant agreed and continued, “Each party must be a willing participant in the process.” Vicki added, “Yes, and each party needs to live up to their

obligations, such as doing observations and sticking to a meeting schedule.” Sydney was the last participant to comment on this. She really focused on the collaborative aspect of the relationship.

I think it is important that the two parties look at this as a partnership. Teaching is not easy, especially dealing with a special education population. I view that mentee as a source of support for me. I think if there is a sense of trust and you can feel comfortable with your mentee, you can work together. I think they learn just as much from collaboration than just getting a bunch of details from me.

After Sydney had finished there was a general affirmation of her statement by the rest of the group. Brad did not elaborate on this question.

The next three questions posed to the mentors were interrelated. First, they were asked about what types of activities they were involved in with their mentees. Second, they were asked that out of these activities, which were the most beneficial. Third, mentors were asked which of these were least effective. Two activities were common among all of the mentors. Each stated that they met with the mentees to discuss how things were progressing. They each also stated that they completed classroom observations of their mentees and provided feedback. Sydney, Jennifer, and Scott each stated that they did some joint lesson planning with their mentees. The mentors did not provide much feedback regarding which activities were most and least beneficial. The mentors avoided responses in the negative.

Transitioning the group to research question three, the mentors were asked to comment on how they felt the relationship was progressing. Jennifer said, “My relationship with Megan is going great professionally and I also enjoy spending time with her on a personal level.” Grant also commented on how his relationship had grown both professionally and personally. Grant stated, “Scott is a really cool guy and fun to be around. We collaborate a lot on lessons and strategies. We also dabble in competitive running and we train and run races together.” Sydney and Vicki both

said that they had really enjoyed working with their mentees up to that point. Sydney said she was able to “collaborate with Kenny” around his need with crafting IEPs and Vicki said that working with John was “a pleasure” and that she got “a lot out of their interaction.”

Brad was the final one to comment on this question. Brad seemed slightly apprehensive in answering the question. When he did respond, it was clear that he did not feel his relationship was going as well as he wanted it to.

I enjoy my interactions with Katie but, it is really hard to find the time to meet. We do not share a planning period and her classroom is clear across campus. I would make a meeting with her and something would come up, she would make a meeting with me and something would come up. Finding the time has made it difficult to build a solid relationship.

Grant commented on Brad’s response with, “It can be hard to find time but you have to make it a priority. You’re a big support structure for your mentee and you have to take the obligation seriously.” Vicki commented that she did not share a planning period but worked to find the time. Vicki said, “You may just have to try and set some time up after school. That has worked for John and I.” Vicki also commented, “Administration should do a better job of making sure we have a shared planning period with our mentees.”

The final question posed to the mentors asked them how they wanted the relationship to progress and how they would ensure it was successful. The mentors were directed to each take turns answering this question. Vicki started and said she wanted to “continue to collaborate, teach her mentee some strategies he could use in the classroom, and learn some tricks for myself.” Vicki said she would ensure the relationship was successful by “listening” to her mentee and keeping an “open two-way communication” with John. Brad followed Vicki and said he wanted to “increase the time spent with Katie” and said he would ensure the relationship was successful by “making it a priority.” Sydney answered next and said, “I want to continue to exchange ideas with Kenny. I



think he still needs to work on the paperwork aspect and I will help him with that.” Sydney stated she would ensure the relationship was successful by “continuing to have an open door policy with Kenny.” Jennifer stated she wanted to increase the observations and have Megan watch her and other teachers more. She stated that she would ensure the relationship was successful by “continuing to provide learning opportunities for Megan.” Grant rounded out the responses and said he wanted to continue to “collaborate with Scott on a professional level and continue to enjoy his company on a personal level.” Grant stated he would ensure the relationship was successful by making sure Scott “knows that I am here for him, no matter what he needs.”

This was the first time the mentors had come together and discussed their mentee–mentor relationships during this study. There were some common themes that arose through the group discussion. Each of the mentors in one way or another stated that they wanted to mentor a new teacher because of the learning opportunities it offered them. It was obvious that each mentor wanted to provide a support structure for the mentees, especially when talking about mentoring’s overall role in the professional development of the new teachers. All of the mentors discussed having meetings and completing observations of their mentees. Three of the mentors also found it beneficial to plan lessons with their mentees. It was clear that the mentors thought it was important to make the relationship a priority, especially if the interactions were going to be meaningful. Finally, all of the mentors saw this as a collaborative process and wanted to ensure that both parties learned from the shared experiences.

### **First Focus Group Session: Mentees**

The initial focus group format was the same with the mentees as it was for the mentors. After all of the participants had logged into the chat, the moderator asked each to introduce themselves, and briefly to describe their professional experience prior to beginning their teaching career. This again allowed the new teachers to learn some information about each other and allowed the participants to acclimatize themselves to the lag time created by the online video-chat

program. The moderator then thanked all of the participants for being present and explained that this was a semi-structured conversation. The moderator explained that he had a series of guiding questions to help lead the discussion, but that if participants wanted to make a point, that they were free to do so. The moderator asked that everyone remain respectful of each other during the conversation, allow participants to finish speaking before starting to comment, and that the focus group would last approximately one hour.

The first question posed to the mentee participants asked why they had decided to become teachers. John immediately started the answers off. He stated that he had become a teacher because he wanted to do something “more rewarding and fulfilling than retail management.” Megan stated that she wanted to teach because she wanted to “inspire and facilitate young people in expressing themselves.” Scott said he “wanted a change from practicing law” and saw teaching as a way to “get kids excited about law.” Kenny commented that he wanted to “make a difference with kids with special needs.” Katie attributed her desire to teach because of some great teachers she had had in the past.

I had some great teachers when I was in high school. I remember that my government teacher was particularly great. She really started my interest in government and politics. I also was on the school newspaper staff for four years. The teacher was fantastic. She really got me excited about journalism. I think she is the primary reason why I studied journalism in college and wanted to teach and share my love of writing with students today.

Addressing research question number one and the relationship between mentoring and the first-year teachers’ professional growth, the mentees were asked to reflect on what role the mentoring relationship had played in their development up to this point. The participants each took some time before responses began. Scott started by commenting that he felt that mentoring was a large part of his overall growth.

I am getting certified through an alternative certification path. I am taking a couple of classes at the community college that are required for certification. Most of them are theory. Most of my growth as a teacher is occurring through my interaction with Grant and the assistance he is providing me. Aside from that, I have not been offered much else in the way of professional development.

John also shared Scott's feeling. John commented as well that he was taking a few classes but that Vicki was his only "regular means of professional development." Kenny said that Sydney was his "primary means of professional development at this point." Katie showed some disappointment with the role that mentoring was playing in her professional development at this point.

I really feel that at this point, although my mentor has been helpful, we do not meet frequently enough. We do not share the same planning period, which creates an issue of finding the time to meet. The mentoring from Brad has really been the only opportunity provided by the school for professional development at this point aside from the week-long new teacher induction before school started. So because of that I would have to say it's a large part of my professional development but I would also have to say I am a bit disappointed in the development I have received from the relationship.

Megan was complimentary of her mentor and stated that she had been an "incredible resource" in her professional development.

Understanding the elements of what makes a successful mentee–mentor relationship is the focus of research question number two. The mentees were asked what they thought were the elements to a successful mentee–mentor relationship. Kenny responded first and said he thought there needed to be "trust and respect" along with "open communication." He also said that the mentor having experience and sharing that experience was important. All of the participants agreed

with this statement, some by nodding, and others by verbalizing their agreement. Megan specifically followed up on that comment and said that open communication was an important part of her relationship and that her mentor was always sharing first-hand experiences with her. John also believed that trust, respect, and open communication were important, but he also added that the mentor and mentee needed to make sure they were “honest and up front” with each other. Katie said that there needed to be an “investment in the relationship” and a “time commitment” on the part of both parties. Scott rounded out the comments and discussed the importance about making a personal connection.

I think what has helped Grant and I develop a solid relationship is that it is not all about business. We talk about other things aside from teaching. We both are avid runners and this shared interest has led to us running some races and training together. I know he has my back and will help me come along as a teacher because I know he is more than a mentor to me, he is a friend.

The next guiding question also addressed research question number two and what elements were important to a successful mentee–mentor relationship. The mentee participants were asked what activities they had been completing with their mentors. John was the first to respond to this question and stated that Vicki had been doing observations twice a month and that they met at least once a week to “see how things were going, offer advice, and talk about strategies” he could use in the classroom. Megan also said that she met once a week with her mentor and that Jennifer had done observations in her classroom. Megan also mentioned that she shared a planning period and several times Jennifer and she had planned lessons together. Scott said Grant had done “all the things previously mentioned” and that daily they would walk to the office together and “chat about how our classes are going.” Kenny said that his mentor Sydney had done observations, held regular meetings, and planned lessons with him. He also stated that Sydney had attended some of his IEP meetings and provided feedback on his documentation.

Sydney has really helped me out with drafting my IEPs. This is where I think I struggle the most; all of the documentation and paperwork involved with special education. She really knows the program and has helped me several times during meetings. She has reviewed IEPs and offered some really great suggestions.

Katie's response was slightly critical of her interactions with Brad. The response focused on their inability to devote regular time to the relationship.

Brad and I have met a handful of times and he has sat in on a couple of classes, I just feel that we are not meeting enough. It has been hard to set a regular meeting schedule. I think I could really benefit from regular meetings and more feedback from observations.

John followed up on Katie's comment and asked her if she had expressed this to Brad. Katie responded that she had not. John suggested that she "have a conversation" with him and express her feelings. He also suggested to Katie that she should take more of an initiative in setting up meetings and seeking Brad out. Scott did not specifically respond to this question, but had alluded to observations and regular meetings in his earlier response.

Considering the activities the mentee participants discussed in their previous responses, they were asked to reflect on which were most effective and which they felt were least effective. Kenny said he thought it was really effective when Sydney "reviewed and provided feedback" on the IEPs he was working on. Megan stated she "really enjoyed planning lessons with Jennifer." John said he "really appreciated the reflection on observations" he had with Vicki. Scott said he really benefited from the "casual discussions" he had with Grant on a daily basis. Katie did not respond to this question and none of the participants pointed out any least effective practices.

The focus of the questions then turned to research question number three, which deals specifically with the development of the relationship. The mentees were asked how they felt their relationship was progressing. Scott said his relationship with his mentor was "progressing

wonderfully” and felt he “worked well with Grant.” Megan was very happy with the way her relationship with Jennifer was progressing and commented, “We really collaborate with one another.” John agreed with Megan and remarked, “If I have an issue in class that I need advice on, Vicki and I are able to really put our heads together to come up with a solution.” Kenny stated that he “felt very comfortable with Sydney” and was “happy to have a relationship that is open and honest.” Katie said she wanted to “make a bigger effort to meet” so that she could “promote more collaboration” in respect to her interactions with Brad.

The final question asked of the mentee participants concerned their role in ensuring the relationship would be successful going forward. Scott responded that he would “continue to be dedicated to the process of improving” himself and be “open and honest” with his mentor. Kenny and Megan both echoed Scott’s response. John stated he would continue to seek advice and share with Vicki his hopes for himself as a teacher.

I really trust Vicki and know she is here to help me. She has a lot of experience that I have been able to tap into. I want to make sure I am honest about how I want my career to progress. I want to make sure I express my hesitations as a professional. If I can do this, I think she can really identify where I need the most support.

Katie was the last to comment and she ended the focus group session on a positive thought.

After listening to what everyone has talked about and seeing the support that they have gotten through their mentoring relationships, I am really going to reach out to Brad and see if we can’t start meeting more. I do believe he has a lot of offer and I think if we can meet more, we will find collaborating with each other will help us both grow as professionals.

It was obvious from this first focus group that all of the participants, with the exception of Katie, felt good about their mentee–mentor relationship. Each, with the exception of Katie, portrayed their relationship as a collaborative one. Common elements that led to this collaboration

were open communication and trust. Each of the participants stated that their mentors were involved with meetings with them and observed them in their classrooms. The activities were seen as beneficial to the mentees. All of the mentees seem dedicated to being active participants in the relationship in order to make it successful for the remainder of the year.

Katie was the only mentee participant that seemed to be struggling with the relationship with her mentor. The primary reason for this struggle seemed to stem from a lack of engagement with her mentor Brad. Though struggling, Katie seemed to be determined to work to improve the relationship so that she could grow professionally from the experience.

### **Second Focus Group Session: Mentors**

The second focus group sessions were held in the last week of April, after the start of the fourth quarter of school. Like the previous set of focus group meetings, mentee and mentor groups were hosted separately to promote candidness among the participants and allow them to discuss their experiences with one another from their perspectives.

The final focus group for the mentor participants was designed to promote reflection among the participants about the mentee–mentor relationship. The guiding questions allowed for participants to reflect on what made the relationship successful, collaborative in nature, and what benefits the mentor took away in the form of opportunities for professional growth. The focus group was held utilizing Google Chat. The researcher served as the moderator. After each participant had logged into the chat, the moderator welcomed them and thanked them for their participation. Unlike the first focus group, the participants were not asked to introduce themselves. The moderator did remind the participants to be respectful of one another and to allow each participant to finish speaking before others interjected comments into the discussion. The moderator told the participants that the discussion should last approximately one hour.

The first question posed to the mentor participants related to research question one and the role mentoring had played in the new teacher mentees' professional development. It asked the mentors what type of growth they had witnessed with their mentees and how they felt the mentoring relationship had played a part in this growth. Grant started the group off by commenting that he had seen Scott grow "instructionally." He said, "I can tell Scott is far more comfortable now in front of a class of kids than he was at the beginning of the year." Grant attributed the mentoring relationship with providing Scott "A way to discuss how to really present the materials so that the students got it." Vicki also commented that she had seen the same type of growth in John, her mentee.

I have really seen John become more comfortable in reading his students. He is really now able to understand student weaknesses and differentiate to meet their needs. One of the things we have worked on in our collaborations is taking a lesson and thinking of two or three ways to present it so that we can make sure all of the students get what we are trying to convey.

Jennifer also commented on the difference in instructional competency from the beginning of the year to the end. She remarked, "Megan also has really grown. She really puts together some great lessons." Jennifer attributed joint planning sessions and reflection as a way that the relationship had assisted her mentee. Sydney commented on Kenny's confidence level with parents. She said, "He really is much more confident with parents because he is surer of the processes." Sydney really felt that working with Kenny on drafting IEPs and being a support in parent meetings helped him with this confidence. Brad was the last to comment on this question. He reported that the mentoring effort had improved over the last half of the year. Brad said that Katie had "become more comfortable in the classroom" and he attributed that to gained experience and increased reflection between the two.



Next the mentors were asked to reflect on what elements on an interpersonal level attributed to the relationship being successful. This addressed research question two and the “elements” of a successful relationship. Sydney was the first to comment and said a “willingness to share experiences” really helped her develop a strong relationship with her mentee. She went on to comment, “I was able to share my positive and negative experiences as a teacher. I think he was able to learn from both.” Vicki echoed Sydney’s sentiment and also said that it was important to “be available” to her mentee. Grant agreed with Vicki and Sydney and remarked that he thought sharing interests outside of school helped his relationship with Scott on an interpersonal level. Jennifer also said that allowing the relationship to become “personal” allowed their professional relationship to grow. Brad was the last to comment and he talked about the initial struggles and how a re-commitment to the process had helped him and Megan to develop a stronger mentee–mentor relationship.

I really committed myself to the process the second half of the year. Megan and I both made meeting with each other on a regular basis a priority. We also made a commitment to be open with one another to make the most out of those meetings. Creating the time and committing to the process really helped to improve the relationship. I think now, we have a solid, collaborative relationship. I know I am learning a lot from her now and I believe my advice and suggestions are helping her in the classroom as well.

Collaboration is a key element to research question number three. The question seeks to understand how the relationship shifts from a one sided to a collaborative effort in which both parties learn from one another. The next question posed to the mentors addressed this element and asked them to reflect on why they believed their relationship had been able to be collaborative. Jennifer responded first and attributed the collaboration to “open communication” and being “open-minded.” Sydney agreed with Jennifer and added that she would ask Kenny for advice.

I really tend to struggle with using technology in the classroom. Let's face it, today's classroom looks nothing like the one I started in. Kenny is really up on instructional technology so I asked him to show me some things. I think he felt good about the fact that I was learning from him while he was learning from me.

Grant agreed with Sydney and remarked that he had actually asked for Scott's help with planning some lessons that had some legal principles imbedded. He said, "I am always asking Scott's opinion when I cover some legal concepts in class. We help each other." Brad and Vicki both said they agreed with what the others had stated.

Continuing with the discussion on collaboration, the mentors were asked what benefited them the most professionally from the relationship with their mentee. Each of the mentors commented about reflection in some way. Grant said that "helping someone else always allows me to look at my own practice and get better." Sydney remarked, "It renewed my interest in my own teaching." Brad stated, "I am able to see what someone else is doing in the classroom and compare it with myself." Jennifer commented that she was able to get a "fresh perspective" and "apply new theory" to her practice. Vicki discussed her ability to "learn through reflection."

It really makes you a strong teacher when you can look objectively at what someone else is doing. You are able to step back and observe how students react to certain instructional strategies. You cannot always see this when you are in the moment teaching. It really allows me to look at my own instructional strategies and improve them.

Finally, the mentors were asked by the moderator about the role administrators could play in supporting the mentee-mentor relationship. Brad responded very strongly, "They need to provide us time to meet with our mentees." His sentiment was echoed by the rest of the participants. He went on to comment about the lack of time.

It would have been so much easier to meet with Katie if we had shared a common planning period. We did not have the chance to meet before school started because I was not assigned as her mentor until the second week of school. Admin needs to provide time that is carved out to meet so these relationships can be successful.

Vicki also believed that time was important but administration should also make pairings based on teaching assignments.

Not only did John and I not share a planning period, we also do not teach the same subject. I think that good instruction is good instruction no matter what subject area but, if we had taught the same subject matter, those times when John struggled with the material would have been better served by me.

Jennifer, Sydney, and Grant each agreed with the others. Each of them also mentioned that they would have benefited from meeting their mentee before the school year had started.

The mentors all saw the mentee–mentor relationship as an important part of the new teachers' professional development. They each commented on how they saw positive growth in the mentees, specifically in the areas of instruction and comfort level in a classroom. Collaboration was a common thread among each of the mentor participants. They each attributed this collaboration to maintaining open communication with their mentees. The relationship between Brad and his mentor Megan improved after the frequency of communication increased between the two. Each mentor felt that through the act of mentoring a new teacher, they were able to grow professionally primarily through the inherent reflection prompted within their own practice. Finally, they all agreed that the best action for administration to take in regards to supporting the mentee–mentor relationship was to provide adequate time to meet. Some also felt that administration needed to keep subject areas in mind when making the mentee–mentor pairings.

The format for the second and final mentee focus group was the same as it was for the mentors. After each participant had logged into the chat, the moderator welcomed them and thanked them for their participation. Unlike the first focus group, the participants were not asked to introduce themselves. The moderator did remind the participants to be respectful of one another and to allow each participant to finish speaking before others interjected comments into the discussion. The moderator told the participants that the discussion should last approximately one hour.

### **Second Focus Group Session: Mentees**

The final focus group for the mentee participants was designed to promote reflection among the participants about the mentee–mentor relationship. The guiding questions allowed for participants to reflect on what made the relationship successful, collaborative in nature, and what role the relationship had played in their professional development as first-year teachers. These questions directly addressed each of the three research questions.

The first question asked the mentees to reflect on their own growth throughout the school year and the role the mentee–mentor relationship had played in it. Megan began the discussion by commenting that she “is a lot more confident now” than when she started the school year. She attributed the “advice, guidance, and encouragement” she had received from her mentor as a driving force for this confidence. Kenny agreed with Megan and said he was also “a lot more confident” now than at the beginning of the year. He stated that he was “more confident in knowing the processes” surrounding special education. He attributed this confidence to Sydney’s help and assistance throughout the year. John said he was much better at managing a classroom.

I was really sort of scared at the beginning of the year. I was afraid that I was just going to totally lose control of one of my classes and the kids were going to be hanging from the rafters. It ended up that I really was pretty good at managing a classroom and I think it is

because of the guidance and suggestions offered by Vicki. After my first couple of observations, she gave me some ideas around proximity to problem students and the way I had my room set up. Those really helped out a lot.

Scott continued on from John's point. Scott remarked, "Grant really did provide me with a lot of help on how to deal with students and parents." He went on to say, "I would ask questions based on scenarios and he was pretty spot on with his advice." Katie was the last to respond and focused on the improvements in her mentee–mentor relationship that had occurred in the second half of the year.

I am really happy with the way things have been going this last half of the year. Brad and I meet on a regular basis and this has really helped me when I am struggling with something in the classroom. I feel like now he has my back and is there when I need him. Between just having a year behind me plus the increased interaction with Brad, I am far less stressed now.

The second question asked of the participants addressed research question two and the "elements" piece of the mentee–mentor relationships. The mentees were asked to reflect on what elements they felt enabled the interpersonal component of the relationship to be successful. John commented first and he said, "Most importantly I trusted Vicki." He also stated that he felt "comfortable" and that she was "always available" when he needed something. Kenny agreed and commented that "trust was imperative" and that he felt he could trust his mentor. Scott remarked that he felt that because he was able to form a personal relationship with Grant due to shared interests, it reinforced the professional mentee–mentor relationship.

Because Grant and I share an interest in running, we hung out a lot outside of school.

Because we are friends, I think it makes the professional relationship that much stronger. I know that he has my best interest in mind when he gives me some advice. For a new

teacher who can essentially be let go fairly easily at the end of the year, it is nice to know someone really has your best interest at heart.

Megan followed up on Scott's comment and believed that she had "gotten to know Jennifer on a personal level." She attributed this to the success of their relationship. Katie said that investing the time in the relationship was an essential element to making it a success and remarked that "after the time was invested, our relationship flourished."

The next question posed to the mentees addressed the collaborative piece in research question three. In their interviews, each of the mentees had characterized their relationships with their mentors as collaborative. The mentees were now asked why they felt their relationships were collaborative in nature. Scott commented first and said he felt that he "worked with Grant." Clarification was requested by the moderator. Scott then remarked, "I do not feel like I am the one always going to him for advice, he comes to me as well, especially when a lesson he is working on involves legal concepts." Jennifer shared this sentiment. She said, "Megan and I are always planning together and giving each other ideas." Kenny also said he felt he was providing growth opportunities for his mentor.

Sydney and I really work well together. We plan lessons together and many times she has taken some of my ideas and incorporated them into her plans. I really get a lot of tricks from her and in turn she picks up some stuff from me, especially when it comes to using technology. I think I have really helped with incorporating more technology into her classroom, especially using the Smart Board.

John and Katie agreed with the others but did not add any additional comments.

Referring back to research question one, the mentees were asked about what role this relationship had played in their development as first-year teachers. Katie answered first and stated that initially, it was a small part, but during the second half of the year, she had "really depended"

on the guidance from her mentor. Scott commented that Grant had showed him “the ropes” and aside from the induction week at the beginning of the year, mentoring from Grant had been the only development provided by the school. Kenny said, “If it were not for Sydney, I would have never been able to navigate all of the ins and outs of the SPED (special education) program.” Megan agreed with Scott’s comment he had made prior to Kenny’s answer. She remarked, “Jennifer has been a constant all year.” John rounded out the comments and said, “Vicki has been consistent and available. She has been my primary development piece here at school.”

Finally, the mentee participants were asked to provide feedback on how administration could provide more support for the mentee–mentor relationships. The responses mirrored those of the mentors. Each of the participants commented that administration could best serve the mentee–mentor relationship by providing time to facilitate meetings. Katie stated her relationship would have been “much more successful” if time had been allotted to meet before the school year started and if she had shared the same planning period with Brad. John agreed with Katie and said, “It would have been very nice to have the same planning period as Vicki.” Scott, Kenny, and Megan felt they had plenty of time throughout the year because they shared planning periods, but echoed Katie and John about wanting to have time before the school year started to meet with their mentors. John and Katie also remarked that they felt mentors and mentees should teach the same subject. John said, “It would have been nice if Vicki taught reading so when I had a content-related question, she could have addressed it.”

The conversation in the final focus group for the mentees in many ways mirrored that of the mentors. The mentees acknowledged that the relationship with their mentors had aided in their development as first-year teachers. Specifically, they saw their confidence levels rise in the classroom and attributed this at least partly to the support provided by their mentors. The mentees also identified some of the same elements needed to support strong interpersonal relationships with their mentors. Communication and trust both surfaced as important aspects of building that

interpersonal relationship that was essential for collaboration. Two mentees, Scott and Megan, both acknowledged that a personal connection with their mentor aided in the professional relationship. The mentee participants were able to acknowledge and identify instances in which their mentor was able to learn from them, reinforcing the collaboration they had identified during their individual interviews. Finally, the feedback directed at improving administrative support was consistent with the mentor responses. The mentees felt that it was important for administration to provide time for sufficient meetings, that mentors and mentees should have a common planning period, that an opportunity should be provided to meet before the school year begins, and the two mentee participants who did not teach the same subject areas as their mentors felt that this should be addressed.

### **Participant Journaling**

The final piece to the data-collection process was participant journaling. At the beginning of the study, participants were asked to make at least one entry every two weeks (bi-weekly) in a journal that was a Microsoft Office document. The participants were asked to keep this as a running journal and every two weeks, to email the document to the researcher. The participants were given three questions that could be used to help guide their entries. The following questions were prompts that could have been used by the participants when needed. What was your interaction, if any, with your mentee–mentor? How did this interaction make you feel, and how could this interaction have been made better? What do you believe you are learning most from your mentee–mentor? These prompts were given to provide focus if needed, and structure, but were not intended to limit the participant's responses (Creswell, 2007).

Unlike the interviews and focus groups, the journaling data-collection piece required no direct interaction with the researcher, and participants were allowed to make entries at their convenience. The difficulty associated with this form of data collection lay in having the participants regularly record and submit their journal entries. The participants varied in their



frequency of submitting the journal entries. There were email reminders that went out on a bi-weekly basis. The researcher tried to reframe from being overly intrusive into the lives of the participants and attempt to not make the process of participating in the study burdensome. Sydney, Kenny, Grant, and Scott were the most successful in recording journal entries and submitting them regularly, averaging one entry every two weeks. Jennifer, Megan, John, and Vicki averaged one submission every three weeks. Brad and Katie had the least frequent submissions with approximately one submission every three and a half to four weeks. The trend for submissions was that the mentors and mentee pairs seemed to submit during the same time frame, within one to two days of one another. The direction from the researcher did not stipulate simultaneous submission within each pair, but it appeared that communication took place between the participants on submission. This was consistent among each of the pairs.

The following is a summary of the journal entries and trends identified by the researcher. For continuity purposes, as with the participant interviews and focus groups, the information and trends gathered from the journal entries of the mentors will be discussed first. The information and trends gathered from the journal entries of the mentees will then be discussed. The focus of the findings will address the three research questions posed for this study. Some ancillary information will be included if it helps to explain how the relationship between the mentor and mentee developed over the course of the year.

### **Mentor Participant Journal Entries**

Sydney provided journal entries every two weeks as directed by the researcher. Her journal entries were fairly detailed and descriptive. Throughout her journal entries, Sydney describes the types of activities that she was involved in with her mentee, Kenny. She discussed at length the information she gathered from observations and meetings with Kenny and how she planned on moving forward in helping him develop. Meetings that provided reflection and observations both in

classes and in special education meetings were consistent activities mentioned in Sydney's journal entries. The following is a short excerpt from December 5, 2012.

I was able to observe Kenny yesterday working with a teacher in an Algebra 1 class. He had seven special education students in that class. The students were working in groups and his students were spread throughout different groups of regular education students. Kenny did a good job of circulating throughout the groups assisting the students. He had two of his male students in one group and this seemed to create a disruption and was a distraction to the other kids. I am going to talk to him about those two students when we meet tomorrow to see about his thoughts on rearranging their grouping.

In several of Sydney's entries, she discusses being impressed with Kenny's ability to integrate technology into the classroom. On November 21, 2012 she commented, "Kenny did a great lesson in his math support class today using the Smart Board, I want to work with him on putting some lessons together for my classes." There were several other examples similar to this one throughout her journal entries. From her entries, it was apparent that Sydney valued the relationship with Kenny and was learning through this collaboration. On January 10, 2013 Sydney commented in her entry that she "enjoyed the collaboration with Kenny" and acknowledged that she was "learning from him."

Grant was the other mentor that was very consistent at submitting journal entries. His entries were not very descriptive in nature. The entries appeared to be more of a log with limited comments. Within the entries, Grant briefly described the types of activities he was doing to support Scott, his mentee. He focused on his observations and debriefs with his mentee and provided a brief outline of what he discussed in his formal meetings. The following is an excerpt of a journal entry dated November 15, 2012.

I have observed Scott twice this month so far. He is doing very well instructionally and is coming along with his classroom management. I notice very few behavior issues in his classes and he is providing immediate redirection when necessary. We have also met a couple of times this month and planned some lessons together. He actually helped me out with a lesson on the legal principals of Ancient Greece.

There were several similar excerpts as the one above. It was clear from his journal entries that Grant valued the relationship and saw it as collaboration. Grant never discussed the friendship that had evolved between him and Scott. His journal more reflected the mechanics of the mentee–mentor relationship and the activities it involved.

Vicki was fairly descriptive with her journal entries. She too focused on discussing her interactions with John, primarily the meetings and observations. Her entries were less frequent than Grant's and Sydney's. Aside from discussing the observations and feedback given to her mentee, Vicki also mentioned that she was struggling with ensuring she had enough time to devote to the process. On November 2, 2012, Vicki commented on the lack of a common planning period and how it was sometimes a struggle when it came to helping John with content.

I really wish that John and I had the same planning period. It is hard, especially when everything gets so busy around the end of the quarter, to find time to meet. If we just had one common planning period that would make it a lot easier. I am also sometimes struggling with content-related questions. John teaches remedial reading and I teach remedial math. Sometimes I have to steer him to some of his other colleagues for assistance with content-related questions.

Vicki acknowledged through her entries that she had learned from John through her observations and meetings. On April 1, 2013, Vicki commented in her entry that “watching John during my observations has given me ideas that I have incorporated into my classes.” She went on

to discuss that she was able to “get some tips on being organized from John.” It was clear that Vicki saw John as a benefit to her own professional growth.

Jennifer was very linear in her approach to the participant journal. Much like Grant, Jennifer discussed what she had been doing with her mentor and how this focused her plan to assist her mentee. She provided descriptions of her observations and a synopsis of her discussions with Megan. Jennifer was not very descriptive in discussing the actual relationship. On March 5, 2013 she did give a glimpse of how the relationship had developed.

I have been observing Megan on a regular basis. She has really become a lot more confident in her teaching and the way she handles students. We were talking during lunch the other day about a difficult parent. She told me about the way she had handled the situation. I was really impressed. We have a lot of conversations over lunch, some school related and some not. I find them helpful in connecting with Megan on a more personal level.

Jennifer provided examples in her journal entries that provided evidence that her relationship was collaborative in nature. She discussed in a journal entry on November 20, 2012 a joint planning session held with Megan the week earlier, and on January 22, 2013 she discussed an observation in which she was going to “incorporate” a strategy Megan had used in her own classroom.

Brad was the least frequent in submitting journal entries. The journal entries were brief, typically one paragraph in length, and were received on average every four weeks. This improved slightly during the second half of the year. Although the frequency did not change, he was able to provide a greater depth of information about the activities he was doing with Katie, his mentee. During the beginning of the year, Brad’s submissions did discuss the lack of time to meet. On December 10, 2012 Brad commented, “We have only had about six meetings this entire year. It has been extremely difficult to find the time.” He did acknowledge that he had the opportunity to

observe Katie's class twice prior to December. In the same December 10 entry Brad commented, "I have sat in on Katie's class twice, she seems to be a pretty strong teacher."

During the second half of the year, Brad's frequency for submission remained the same, but he did report more activity in those entries. On March 5, 2013 Brad reported in his entry that he and Megan were meeting more frequently and he was really enjoying the collaboration.

This semester I have really worked on making the time to meet with Megan. We have been meeting each week after school at Starbucks. This has been great, I am really learning a lot from her through our discussions and I believe I have been able to give her some advice to take back and put to use in her classroom.

### **Mentee Participant Journal Entries**

Each of the mentors approached the participant journaling a little differently. The depth of information presented by each mentor in their entries varied. Each mentor discussed what type of activities they were involved in with their mentees. The discussion of observations and meetings between the participants were consistent with the interviews and focus groups. The journal entries of the mentors provided examples of collaboration, but unlike the interviews and focus groups, they provided few examples of why this collaboration was taking place.

Kenny was consistent with the bi-weekly request in submitting journal entries. His submissions coincided with his mentor Sydney's submissions. Kenny's journal entries were descriptive and went beyond just describing the activities he was completing with Sydney, also providing insight as to how he felt about those activities and his feelings about the mentee-mentor relationship in general. Kenny identified regular meetings and observations as routine occurrences. He also described the support he received concerning the special education processes. Kenny described this support in a December 6, 2013 entry.

There is so much to know when documenting the student progress for special education. I had no idea that there was so much paperwork involved. Sydney has really helped me work through all of the processes. Last week she was able to review a couple of IEPs I was working on. She caught some mistakes that I had made. It is nice having her be able to do this review, especially before I meet with the case study committee and parents.

Kenny also wrote about the trust and collaboration that existed between him and Sydney. On January 12, 2013, he commented on the success of the first semester and said that “Sydney does not pull any punches, she is honest with me.” He went on in the same post to say, “Because I always know what she is thinking, I trust her. We really work well together.” In an entry dated February 2, 2013, Kenny discussed his work with Sydney on creating Smart Board lessons. He stated, “I helped Sydney put together a vocabulary matching game using the Smart Board. I think she really enjoyed that.” It was clear through Kenny’s journal entries that he appreciated the collaborative nature, and that this type of relationship was promoted through trust and mutual respect.

Scott was also descriptive in his journal entries. This was in contrast to his mentor, Grant, whose entries were more of a log of activities. Scott reported in his journal entries that Grant observed him on a regular basis and provided “rich” feedback in “regular” meetings. Scott discussed in his journal the informal meetings he had with Grant on a daily basis. In his journal entry from November 13, 2012, Scott remarked on the discussions held on his daily walks with Grant to the front office.

The front office is far from where Grant’s and my classrooms are. Each day we walk at the beginning of our planning period up to the front office to retrieve our mail. This gives us a great time to chat about what is going on in our classes. We really bounce a lot of ideas off each other during the round-trip trek to the main office.

Through Scott's responses, you can get a sense of the collaborative nature that has developed within the relationship. Scott did mention in his journal entries the fact that he and Grant were friends outside of work, and that this helped their professional relationship. In an entry from November 27, 2013, Scott discussed a recent race the two had run. He stated, "It is nice that Grant and I share interest outside of school like running. Knowing Grant on a personal level has helped with our professional relationship."

John provided journal entries on average every three weeks. His responses did not provide much description beyond discussing the activities he participated in with Vicki. John's submissions coincided with Vicki's. Within his journal entries, John identified regular meetings and monthly observations as two primary tools Vicki was utilizing to provide support. He also discussed some occasions when he would observe Vicki. In a journal submission from November 3, 2012, John discussed observing one of Vicki's remedial math classes.

I had the opportunity last week to go into one of Vicki's classes to observe. She really has a nice way with students. She had students working in groups and she was at the front of the class working with one of the groups. You could tell she had grouped the students according to ability and she was working with the group that needed the most help. The room was a bit less organized than what I like but I really enjoyed how she did the groupings.

It was clear that John appreciated the efforts Vicki was making to assist him while acknowledging the limitations created by having different planning periods and teaching different subject areas. He commented in the same November 3, 2012 entry that "Vicky found answers" for him when she did not know the answer to the questions he was asking. He said that she would "point him in the right direction" if she was unsure about a content-related question. John also pointed out that it was sometimes difficult to meet due to available time. He remarked, "It can be hard to find the time to meet because we do not share a planning period."

Megan was descriptive with her journal entries and submitted them approximately every three weeks. Her submissions coincided with her mentor's. Megan described a collaborative relationship with her mentor within her journal entries. She identified observations and regular meetings as two of the main forms of support provided through the relationship. Jennifer provided a description of a relationship that was supported by open communication and a willingness to listen on the part of her mentor. On November 19, 2012, Megan discussed this open communication and willingness to listen on the part of her mentor.

Last week was really tough. I shared with Jennifer that a lesson I was really excited about just did not work when I presented it to the students. I really was not able to switch gears and I feel like I wasted 90 minutes of class time. Jennifer and I talked about the lesson and developed some alternatives covering the same standards. It was nice being able to be completely honest with her about things I was having a tough time with and her not be judgmental. She is really helpful and a great sounding board.

Megan consistently mentioned concepts such as trust, open communication, and collaboration throughout her journal entries. It was apparent that Jennifer had made herself available to Megan. Megan felt comfortable approaching Jennifer and was confident in Jennifer's ability to help her to become a better teacher.

Among the mentee participants, Katie submitted the least number of journal entries averaging one a month, similar to her mentor Brad. The first three she submitted prior to the end of the first semester tended to have a negative tone. It was apparent that she was not happy with the way the relationship with her mentor was progressing. Her primary complaint was her perceived lack of interaction with her mentor. Below is a journal entry from December 5, 2012, discussing the perceived lack of interaction.



It has been extremely difficult thus far finding time a time that is conducive for both of us to meet. I think he (Brad) has been in my room three times for observations but when it comes to sitting down and meeting, we have not done so on a regular basis. I do not fault Brad completely; I too have found it difficult to meet sometimes. Our planning periods are at different parts of the day and our rooms seem like they are miles from each other. It's difficult to get advice from someone if you can't seem to nail down a good time to sit down and talk.

The improvement in the relationship that was discussed in the individual interviews and final focus group was apparent in the journal submissions as well. In an April 3, 2013 submission, Katie discussed how she was then meeting regularly with Brad after school and she felt like she was currently “getting a lot of support from Brad” and that she felt like there was an “open line of communication” now.

Through the journaling process, the mentors and mentees confirmed that two key support functions utilized for support were performing observations and having regular meetings. Open communication and trust were both factors identified as elements to building a collaborative relationship. Both Scott and Jennifer commented on personal connections made with their mentors, and how this strengthened their professional relationship. By increasing the frequency during which they met, Katie and Brad were able to greatly enhance their mentee–mentor relationship.

### **Analysis and Triangulation**

Throughout the data collection process, central themes emerged that helped to answer the three research questions that guided this study. These themes were consistent across each of the three primary data collection methods. The following is an analysis of how the data from each of the primary data collection methods supported central themes that answered the three research questions.

## Research Question 1

**Mentoring as a primary support.** Research question one asked what role does mentoring play in the professional development of a first-year teacher. Each of the mentees reported in their interviews, focus group sessions, and journal entries that the mentoring relationship served as their primary means of professional development offered by the school or district. The new teachers each participated in a week long induction program before school started but the mentoring relationship was the only sustained activity they had participated in the school setting.

In his second interview, Scott commented that his was relationship with Grant was “really the only support he had received from the school.” John made a similar comment during the final mentee focus group.

Vicki has been the main support I have had at within the school this whole year. She is the one I go to when I have problems and when I need help with situations. Occasionally I have sought out administration to answer a question but Vicki is my go to girl.

Mentee participant sentiments were similar in their journal entries. Megan discussed her relationship with Jennifer as her “primary source for professional development” and went on to say in later entries that she really “counted on Jennifer for help and advice.” Scott also called Grant in one journal entry his “go to guy.”

**Mechanical and emotional support.** This primary support provided by the mentors to the mentee participants can be categorized into two main categories. First, the mentors provided mechanical support to the mentee participants. The term mechanical support refers to the assistance the mentors provided in support of the “nuts and bolts” of teaching such as; classroom management, curricular support, lesson planning, and administrative tasks associated with teaching. This support came in form of observations, regular meetings, and in class assistance. Each of the mentees

consistently reported in the interviews, focus groups, and participant journals these types of activities.

The mentors also served as an emotional support to the mentee participants. The impact of this type of support was clear throughout the interviews, focus groups, and journal entries. Scott grew very close to his mentor and in an interview stated that “Grant has my back.” This comment specifically referenced his need for encouragement and fear because of his status as a probationary teacher. In an interview, Megan references an occasion when a lesson did not go well and how Jennifer provided her with emotional support and encouragement. Megan commented, “I felt like I wasted 90 minutes” and went on to describe how Jennifer had encouraged her and helped her re-evaluate the lesson.

During the focus group sessions, mentee participants reported that their mentors were encouraging and supportive. Katie commented in the final focus group that her relationship with Brad had vastly improved the second half of the year and she felt that he provided her with “a safe space to express my feelings.” Scott also felt like Grant provided support “during the tough times.” Similar sentiments were present in the journal entries as well. John mentioned several times that when his day was progressing badly Vicki would “be there to pick me up.” Megan also mentioned that Jennifer always had “words of encouragement” for her.

Throughout the data collection, it became clear that the mentee participants relied on their mentors as their primary source of support. This support was offered in advice, guidance, modeling, and feedback. The support was also emotional in nature, providing encouragement during the mentees sometimes difficult first year of teaching.

## **Research Question 2**

What are the key components to the mentor-mentee relationship? Similar to research question 1, both mechanical and emotional components emerged as essential to the success of the

mentor-mentee relationship. Both types of components were seen as important to the overall success of the relationship.

**Mechanical Components.** The data identified mechanical components that were essential to the success of the relationships and consistent among each of the participants. The three key components that were consistent among all five mentor-mentee pairs were: regular meetings, classroom observations, and collaborative planning.

During the second round of interviews, each of the mentor and mentee participants reported that they were utilizing each of these three components within the context of their relationships. The only mentor-mentee pair that initially struggled was Brad and Katie. Katie was particularly critical of Brad in her second interview and in the first mentee focus group session. She continually referred to the lack of “time” as a primary factor to their struggling relationship. At the mid-year point, Brad and Katie had recorded the least frequency of all three activities (regular meetings, observations, and lesson planning) among the mentor-mentee participant pairs. They had also submitted the fewest journal entries.

When examining the journal entries from each of the participants, there is mention of each of the three activities throughout. Vicki and Sydney each discussed at length the observations they completed of their mentee. Sydney mentioned in an early entry, “It is nice going in and watching what Kenny is doing, especially when he is incorporating technology into the lesson.” Kenny in turn discussed the feedback he received from Sydney in his journal entries. In November he wrote, “I really like when Sydney comes to my class and observes. She always gives me some great feedback.”

**Emotional components.** Along with the mechanical components, the participants also acknowledged several emotional components necessary to promote a successful mentor-mentee relationship. These less tangible components include: communication, trust, respect, collaboration,

and openness to the mentoring process. Each of the participants discussed these components throughout the data collection process.

Communication was noted as strength by Vicki and John; Jennifer and Megan; and Grant and Scott. Grant and Scott both talked about their frequent conversations during their daily walk to the front office in their interviews, during the focus group sessions and in their journal entries. Scott commented in an early journal entry, “We talk on a daily basis, every morning during our walk to the office.” He also mentioned this same activity within his second interview and first mentee focus group session. Although Grant did not specifically mention the daily talks during the focus group sessions, he made mention of it in his final two interviews and within his journal submissions.

Trust and respect were also common themes among the participants in their interviews, focus groups, and journal entries. Kenny mentioned several times in interviews and journal entries that he respected Sydney and appreciated her candidness. Scott and Grant illustrated a mutual respect throughout their interviews and journal entries. Their responses reflected not only their professional relationship, but also discussed their personal friendship that had grown because of this mutual trust and respect. In a journal entry submitted in late January 2013, Megan discussed at length how she trusted and respected Jennifer.

I really feel like I can trust Jennifer to steer me in the right direction. I have made plenty of mistakes this year so far but I know Jennifer will be understanding and provide me with good guidance. We have really grown as colleagues and there is definitely a sense of mutual respect there.

Collaboration was another common component reported by all of the participants during the data collection. The participants were specifically asked about collaboration during the last two interviews and both focus groups. Each of the mentor participants categorized their relationship as

collaborative during the interviews. Brad and Katie had the most difficult time collaborating with one another because of the self-reported issue of a lack of time to devote to the relationship. All other mentor-mentee pairs reported strong collaboration with one another. In a journal entry, Jennifer reported that she really enjoyed collaborating with her mentee Megan.

Today I collaborated with Megan on a lesson on subject-verb agreement. She had some great ideas on how to add some fun little games to the lesson to make it fun for the students. Every time we sit down with one another, I always learn something new.

Openness to the mentoring process is the final emotional component necessary to facilitate a successful mentor-mentee relationship. Although this was rarely directly mentioned by the participants in the interviews, focus groups, and participant journals, one can infer this as an important aspect because without openness to the process, the other tangible or intangible components could not be in place.

Through the data collected from participants, it was evident that two sets of components needed to be in place to ensure a successful mentor-mentee relationship. It was critical that mentors provided their mentees with mechanical support structures that included: regular meetings, classroom observations, and collaborative planning. There were also a series of emotional components that needed to be in place as well. In order to promote a successful relationship, both the mentors and mentees had to offer communication, trust, respect, collaboration, and openness to the mentoring process.

### **Research Question 3**

The final research question asked what factors need to be present for the mentee-mentor relationship to move from a single directional to a bidirectional exchange of information that benefits the practice of both parties. This question addresses the gap in the literature and provides a foundation for understanding how the mentoring relationship develops over time and provides not

only direct support to the mentee but residual support for the mentor. An understanding of this relationship develops and benefits both parties can assist school administrators in structuring mentoring programs to ensure maximum impact. Throughout the process of data collection and interaction with the research participants, three factors were identified and needed to be in place to maximize the effectiveness of the relationship and ensure that a collaborative effort was in place that benefited both parties. Participants had to be open to the mentoring process, comfortable with their counterparts, and dedicate the time needed to cultivate the relationship.

**Open to the process.** Being open to the mentoring process was identified in research question two as emotional factor that was critical to the success of the mentoring relationship. This is also a factor that helps allow the relationship to become collaborative in nature and provides an opportunity for both parties to benefit professionally and personally from the relationship. Although there was little direct acknowledgment of openness to the process in the interviews, focus groups, and participant journals, the actions of the participants involved in this study was a demonstration of openness to the mentoring process.

Active participation in the mechanical aspects of the relationship, regular meetings, observations, and collaborative planning, demonstrate that the participants were engaged and open to the process. Each of the participants discussed these activities at length during their interviews, focus groups, and in the participant journals. Each of the participants, both mentors and mentees, discussed the mechanical activities during their interviews and focus groups. Jennifer, Sydney, and Vicki were very descriptive in their journal entries in regards to meetings and classroom observations. It was clear that these activities were taking place and the participants valued them.

The mentor-mentee pairs also viewed each other as a support structure in the relationship. This was evident throughout the interviews, focus groups, and journal entries. Grant and Scott along with Jennifer and Megan captured this sense of mutual support often throughout their interaction with the researcher. Megan stated in one of her final journal entries in April that she had

“grown tremendously throughout the school year because of the help I have received from Jennifer.” Jennifer made a similar comment in her final interview when she stated that “Megan has provided me several ideas I now incorporate in my class. She has helped to renew my interest in teaching.” Both of these mentor-mentee pairs developed a strong professional relationship as well as personal friendships with one another.

The final example of being open to the process was the willingness of the participants to dedicate resources to support the relationship. These resources were things like providing sufficient time to meet and sharing lesson plans and other materials. The resources were both tangible like books to read or copies of lesson plans and intangible such as ideas or advice. This type of sharing was evident with each of the participant pairs throughout the interviews, focus groups, and participant journals. Brad and Katie struggled the most with this aspect of the relationship primarily because they failed initially to dedicate the time necessary to carry out these types of activities. In the interviews and focus groups, both Brad and Katie acknowledged that they had failed to provide the time necessary to cultivate the relationship. Their journal entries reflected a lack of time committed to the process by the frequency of their submissions.

**Time.** Time was a significant factor in the development of the relationships between the mentor and mentee pairs. Without a significant time commitment to the relationship, it is difficult for it be effective in providing mutual support to both participants. Brad and Katie had the most difficulty in providing the time necessary to facilitate a successful relationship. They struggled the most at the beginning of the year. Brad had never mentored a new teacher before and was unaware of the time commitment involved in facilitating the relationship. He acknowledged this in both the focus groups and interviews. Katie also acknowledged this in the focus groups and her individual interviews. Neither made reference to it in their journal entries. Their journal submissions tended to lack description and had no negative responses. Brad and Katie were clear in their desire for



administration to pay closer attention to the means in which the make mentor-mentee pairing and that sufficient time be afforded to facilitate the relationship.

Those that spent more time developing the relationship saw great success in providing support to one another. Grant and Scott discussed in depth in the interviews, focus groups, and participant journal entries their daily discussions, formal and informal meetings, and the time spent together outside of work participating in their shared interest of running. Jennifer and Megan also discussed at length their lunch meetings and this aided in strengthening their professional relationship and developing a personal friendship.

**Comfortable with their counterparts.** In order for the mentoring relationship to be successful, the participants had to be comfortable with one another. The mentors and mentees demonstrated this feeling of comfort with one another when they discussed their willingness to be open with one another about their needs and feelings. Scott stated on several occasions in interviews and the focus groups that he felt he could discuss “anything” with his mentor Grant. Kenny discussed in an interview that he appreciated Sydney’s “vulnerability” and felt she was open about her experiences as a teacher. Sydney in turn felt she could be honest with Kenny and stated in an interview that she had to be careful and not get “too negative” about issues she was having with parents or other teachers. Sydney also presented evidence in her journal entries that she trusted Kenny and felt safe to communicate her needs.

It is difficult to understand some of the technology that is available to help with delivering content. It is so important for a special educator to understand how to use the Smart Board and how to integrate the assistive technology we have available. It is nice having Kenny around, he has really expanded my understanding of technology in the classroom.

Trust and respect were also components that were evidenced in the interviews, focus groups, and participant journals as factors to a successful relationship. The participants had to trust and

respect each other in order to facilitate the ability to communicate needs and provide assistance. John and Vicki provide excellent examples of the need for trust and respect to present in order to facilitate an open dialogue with one another. In the first focus group, John specifically mentioned that trust and respect were necessary for the relationship to grow but went further and said he and Vicki must be “open and honest with one another.” The sentiments were echoed in his interviews and journal entries. In February, John wrote in a journal entry that he “trusted Vicki” to give him “good advice.” Vicki also stated in the first focus group with mentors that she needed to be able to “trust John in order to work with him.”

It is important that both parties view a benefit in participating in a mentoring relationship. The mentee receives a direct benefit in the form of support and guidance over their first year of teaching. The mentor receives a less direct benefit of a renewed interest in their teaching and an expansion of their skill set as an educator in their close interactions with their mentee through an exchange of ideas. In order to facilitate an exchange of ideas and create an environment where both participants are learning from one another, the relationship must have parties that are willing to take part and be open to the mentoring process, develop a comfort level with each other built on mutual trust, respect, and open communication, while investing the time necessary for these processes to take place.

### **Mutually Beneficial New Teacher Mentoring Model**

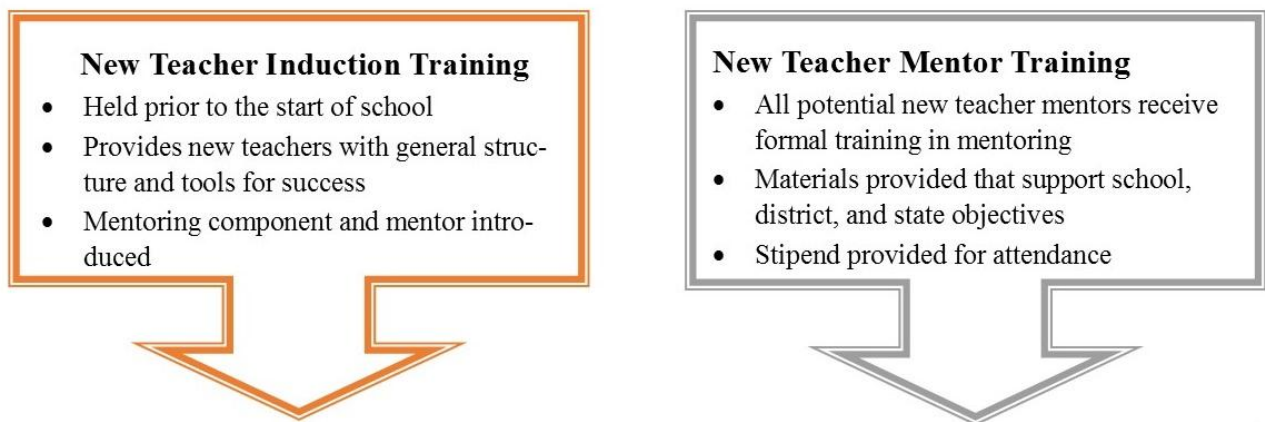
Through the process of conducting this grounded theory study, a model emerged that explains how the relationship between the mentor and mentee develops over time and provides insight to the type of support that school administrations must provide to adequately address the needs of the participants. The model provides the framework to ensure that the new teacher mentor-mentee relationship may provide benefits and support to both parties involved. The model consists of four stages that lead to a collaborative, mutually beneficial relationship. First, both the new teacher and mentor need to be prepared to enter the relationship open to the process and have

the skills needed to facilitate a collaborative relationship between adults. Secondly, the mentor and mentees are thoughtfully paired. Third, the mentors and mentee build a relationship through sustained engagement. Finally, through the sustained engagement, the participants show openness and respect for one another which leads to the collaboration and mutual benefits gained through the relationship.

### **New Teacher and Mentor Preparation**

It is critical that both the new teacher and mentor are prepared to enter the mentee-mentor relationship and understand what is necessary to promote successful collaboration. Understanding the rigors of the relationship can be accomplished through providing pre-service induction to the new teacher and training to the mentor (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Preparation for the Mentee-Mentor Relationship



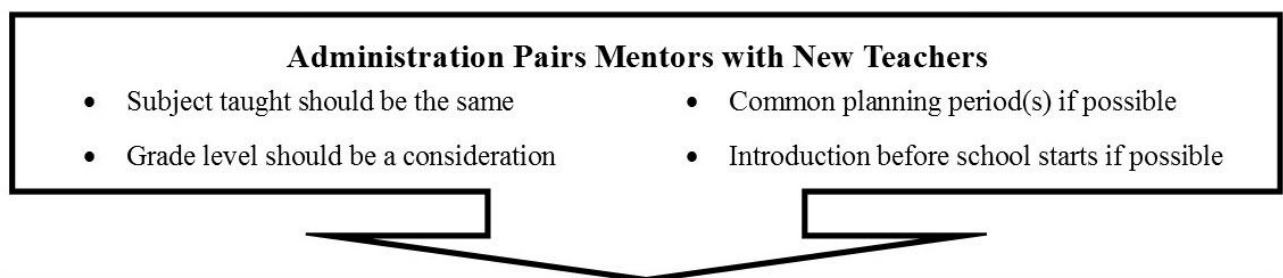
New teachers should receive a pre-service induction program that helps familiarize them with the rigors, expectations, and resources they will encounter during their first year as a classroom teacher. This would be held prior to the start of school. It would provide the teachers with tips and suggestions in the areas of curriculum and classroom management, provide information on what is expected administratively, and be provided an introduction to the mentoring relationship and how it should serve as a support structure throughout the school year. This would include meeting their mentors and begin setting expectations with one another.

The new teacher mentors should also receive pre-service mentor training before beginning their assignment as a new teacher mentor. This training should be formal and include information relevant to the mentoring process. Expectations should be given to the mentors on what their roles is in the development of a new teacher. They should also learn about any state, district, or school requirements for new teachers. These new teacher mentors should be provided guidance on developing relationships with adult learners. The mentor should meet their mentee before school begins to start setting expectations for the year. Finally, these new teacher mentors should be compensated for their time dedicated to the training and performance of mentoring duties.

### **Pairing of the Mentor with the Mentee**

School administrators must be thoughtful in the way that they pair new teachers with their assigned mentors. There are two primary areas of consideration for pairing a new teacher with a mentor (see Figure 2). First, the participants should teach the same subject matter. Secondly, when possible, the mentor and mentee should teach the same grade level.

Figure 2: Pairing of the Mentor with the Mentee



At the high school level, teachers tend to be subject matter experts and classes are compartmentalized by discipline. It is important that a new teacher mentee have a mentor that is familiar with the subject matter that he is she is going to teach. Knowledge of the subject matter, the corresponding learning standards, and assessments are all areas in which a new teacher may struggle and require support with. Although many teaching strategies can be universally applied

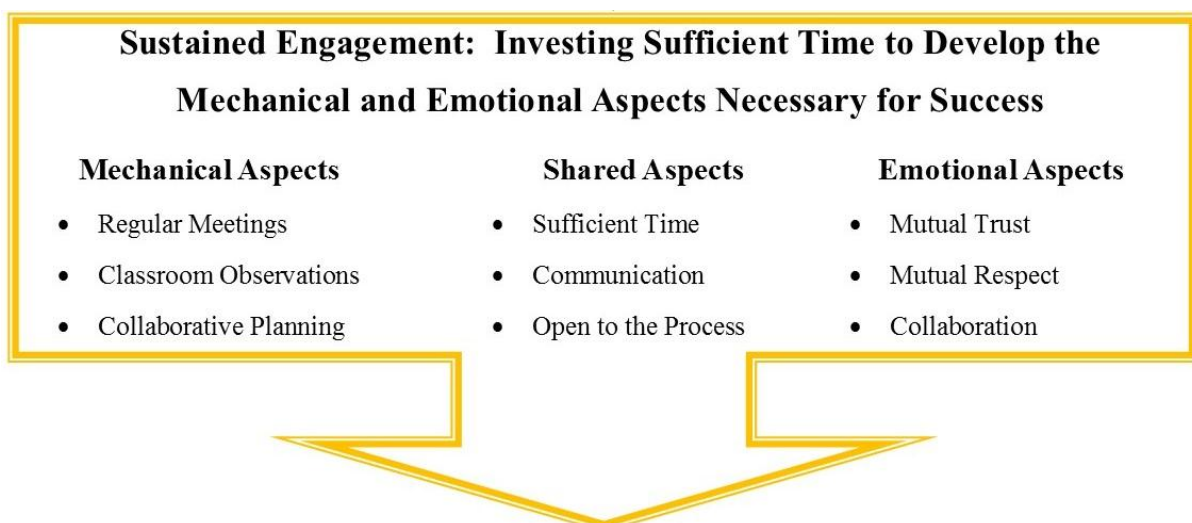
across disciplines, specific content delivery requires a higher level of familiarity that a mentor that teaches the same subject matter can assist with.

Administrators should take into account grade levels when pairing mentors with mentees. At the high school level, 9<sup>th</sup> grade students behave and progress quite differently than 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Having someone that is familiar with the grade level that the new teacher is teaching could prove to be beneficial in the type of support they can provide. This can be difficult at times and grade level assignments can tend to change from year to year. When possible school administrators should assign a mentor to the new teacher that has familiarity with the grade level they will be teaching.

### **Relationship Building and Sustained Engagement**

Building a successful mentor-mentee relationship which allows both parties to benefit is only possible if there is a significant time commitment from both participants. Professional development first requires activities that promote sustained engagement. Within the sustained interaction between the mentor and mentee, it is important that the participants are open and honest with one another about their expectations and needs (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Relationship Building and Sustained Engagement



Brad and Katie's relationship provided an example of the difficulties that can occur when the participants fail to provide adequate time to cultivate a successful relationship. Time must be set aside for regular meetings, observations, planning, and other mechanical functions of the mentor-mentee relationship. Failure to provide this time can impede the ability of the participants to provide support to one another and collaborative efforts will suffer. Participants must have an expectation of the time required to ensure the relationship is successful. While it is important that participants ensure they are devoting the time necessary to cultivate success, school administrators must be cognitive of this requirement and provide a structure to help facilitate mutual availability of the participants.

Devoting the time to the relationship is important but, it is also important that the participants communicate their expectations and needs to one another to get maximum benefit from the relationship. Sharing expectations and needs are both foundations to creating a successful relationship and allow the participants to maximize the time they have together. These expectations and needs must be clearly articulated by both parties. An open and honest dialogue will provide a foundation for trust and respect within the relationship.

### **Time to Reflect with Others**

It is important that as these relationships develop, that the participants are given a chance to reflect with one another and others as to how the year is progressing. This is why regular times for reflection should be given for like individuals, new teachers and mentors, that allow them to come together and share ideas, promising practices, and areas of struggles. This is a part of sustained engagement piece and should at a minimum, occur at the mid-year point in the form of a focus group or roundtable discussion (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Sustained Engagement Reflection Piece

**Mid year focus group to allow reflection with other mentors and mentees**



### **A Collaborative Relationship Develops**

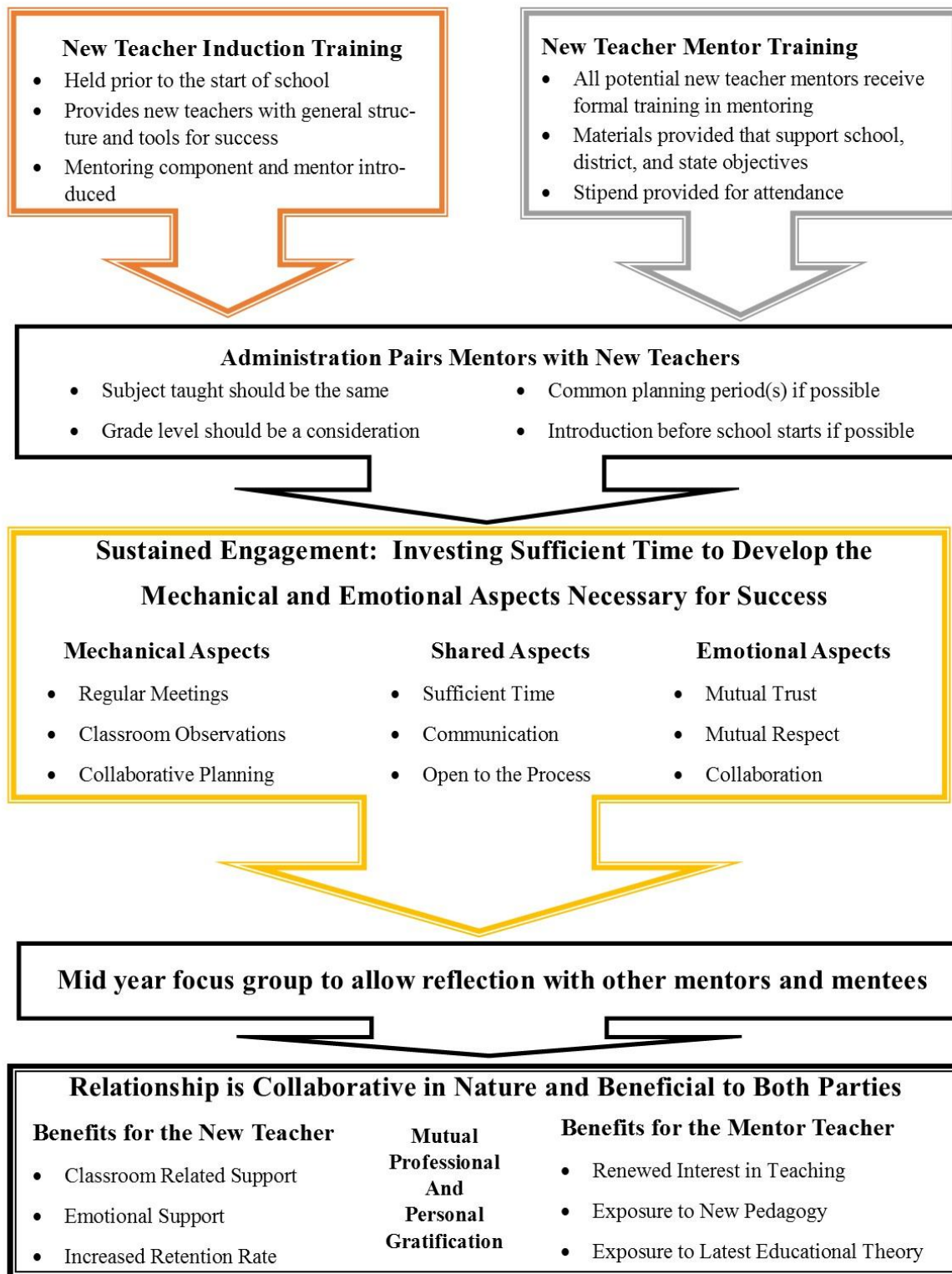
Finally, the ultimate goal of the relationship is to not only provide support to the new teacher but also provide professional growth opportunities to the mentor through collaborative interactions (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Collaborative Relationship Develops

<b>Relationship is Collaborative in Nature and Beneficial to Both Parties</b>		
<b>Benefits for the New Teacher</b>	<b>Mutual Professional And Personal Gratification</b>	<b>Benefits for the Mentor Teacher</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom Related Support</li> <li>• Emotional Support</li> <li>• Increased Retention Rate</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renewed Interest in Teaching</li> <li>• Exposure to New Pedagogy</li> <li>• Exposure to Latest Educational Theory</li> </ul>

This collaboration leads to mutually beneficial actions between the new teacher and their mentor. The new teacher receives the much needed support that is both mechanical and emotional in nature. The mentor provides assistance, guidance, and advice to the new teacher. In return and through collaborative efforts, the mentor will receive support from the new teacher. This support could be in the form of new lesson ideas, exposure to new instructional techniques, insight into recent educational theory, and/or a general sense of renewal in their teaching practices. The mentor and mentee view themselves as colleagues working collectively to better the educational experiences of their students. Together these components create the complete model for a mutually beneficial new teacher mentoring program in which both the mentee and mentor collaborate to provide professional growth opportunities to one another (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Mutually Beneficial New Teacher Mentoring Model





### Summary

The findings in chapter four consisted of data generated through three individual interviews with each participant; two separate focus groups for the mentors and mentees; and participant journaling. The interviews allowed the researcher to gather information from each participant at three different times throughout the school year. This allowed the researcher to understand how the relationship was progressing and changing. Common themes emerged in the areas of activities and collaboration. All of the participants reported that they were involved with observations and regular meetings. Those that shared common planning periods and taught the same subject areas each mentioned that they would plan lessons together. Each of the participants reported that their relationships were collaborative. The participants attributed open communication, trust, and respect as characteristics that supported this collaboration. Through the difficulties discussed by Brad and Katie, time dedicated to the relationship was reviewed as an overall factor to the success of the mentee–mentor relationship.

The focus groups allowed the participants to reflect and share with their respective mentor or mentee peers. Many of the same themes presented themselves during the focus group discussions. All talked about the collaboration they felt was present in their mentee–mentor relationship. Common characteristics that help to facilitate this collaboration were open communication, trust, and respect. Personal connections also seemed to provide an enhanced professional relationship when present.

The participant journaling allowed the mentors and mentees to chronicle their experiences in first person. Most of the participants concentrated more on what they did rather than why they did it. Each of the participants discussed the activities they performed but provided little motivational

information. The journal entries varied in depth and the frequency for submission was not consistent among all participants.

Each of these data points allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of what elements need to be in place to promote a positive environment that would facilitate a collaborative relationship. This understanding led to the development of the Mutually Beneficial New Teacher Mentoring Model, which explains how the relationship develops and what needs to be in place in order to promote collaboration and professional growth among the mentor-mentee colleagues.

In chapter five, the mentee–mentor pairs will be discussed in context with one another. A discussion of the findings will be presented, and will include a theoretical framework on how the mentee–mentor relationship evolves to include collaboration among the parties. Recommendations will be made on how to improve the mentee–mentor process and how school administrators can provide additional support. Recommendations for further research will also be made.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to explore the mentor–mentee relationship and how it developed from a one-way stream of communication in which the mentor was giving information to the mentee to a collaborative relationship in which both parties could benefit professionally from the collaboration. As this qualitative study analyzed the relationships that developed between education professionals, the researcher utilized adult learning theory and andragogy as the lens through which to examine the data. Conclusions were based upon the findings after careful analysis of the data generated through participant interviews, focus groups, and participant journals. Through an examination of the gathered data, the researcher was able to understand the role that mentoring played in the professional development of the ten participants who took part in the study. The factors that lead to the collaborative nature of the relationship become apparent as the progression of the relationships were analyzed.

In this chapter, a summary of the findings will be presented. Each of the three research questions will be answered based on the findings from the data collected within this study. The implications of this research will be presented with respect to the relevant literature from the literature review. The limitations of the study will be discussed, and based upon these, recommendations for future research will be made. Finally, a summary will be presented along with opportunities for improvements to pull all of this information together and bring closure to the research study.

In chapter four, the findings from the data-collection processes were discussed separately, beginning with the mentors, and followed by the mentees. In this chapter, the pairs will be pulled together as the research questions are answered. Looking at the relationship collectively, conclusions can be made about how each particular relationship progressed throughout the year, what elements were in place to allow the participants to collaborate with one another, and to

understand how each individual in the mentor–mentee pair had an influence on each other’s professional development.

### **Summary of Findings**

Based upon the findings gathered through the participant interviews, focus groups, and participant journaling, themes emerged on what role mentoring played in the professional development of the parties involved, what elements were necessary for a successful mentor–mentee relationship, and why the relationships were able to develop into collaboration between professional educators. The following summary discusses these themes as they relate to each of the three research questions.

#### **Research Question 1**

What role does mentoring play in the professional development of a first-year teacher?

Through the participant interviews, focus groups, and journaling, it was clear that the mentor–mentee relationship was the primary support structure provided to new teachers by East End High School and the Central County School District. This support was provided by the mentors in two primary categories: instructional/curricular and emotional support.

**Mentoring as a primary support structure.** Each of the new teacher participants reported that their mentor was the primary support structure provided by the school and district. Three of the new teachers—Megan, Kenny, and Katie—had completed traditional teacher training programs prior to starting their positions at East End High School. None of these participants reported participation in professional development opportunities outside of school. Each acknowledged that the mentor–mentee relationship was the primary means of professional development provided by the school or district. Two of the participants—John and Scott—were seeking certification through alternative routes. Although they were involved in classes outside of school that were geared toward satisfying the educational requirements for their certification, the primary professional development activity provided by the district or school was reported by them as being the mentor–

mentee relationship.

**Mentoring as curricular and instructional support.** Each of the new teacher participants saw their mentors as a means of instructional support in the classroom. These novice educators relied on the experience and expertise of their mentors for gaining advice on instructional techniques, classroom management, and content delivery. This support came in the form of several different activities, but two were consistent among each mentor–mentee pair: regular meetings and classroom observations.

Most of the mentor–mentee pairs met consistently throughout the school year, ranging in frequency from daily to weekly occurrences. Only one pair—Brad and Katie—struggled to hold regular meetings, but the frequency improved as the year progressed. These meetings provided the mentors and mentees with opportunities to discuss class activities, to discuss instructional concerns on the part of the mentee or mentor, and to reflect on observations, and gave the participants the chance to discuss any issues that either party felt needed to be addressed. Three of the mentor–mentee pairs also used some of these regular meetings to jointly plan classroom lessons. Each of the pairs that participated in lesson planning shared a common planning period and taught the same subject matter.

The new teacher-mentee participants saw the support provided by their mentors not only as instructional and curricular, but also as emotional. Throughout the interview process, it was evident that the mentees all felt pressures and stressors to varying degrees throughout their first year as classroom teachers. Each of the new teachers saw their mentors as a source of support through difficult and stressful times. Each discussed how they trusted their mentor and used meetings to not only discuss instructional and administrative tasks, but also talked about how they utilized the time to converse about their struggles in the classroom, and about how these struggles made them feel. This trust between the participants and their willingness to be open and honest about the emotions associated with their roles as teachers developed over time. Some of the participant pairs saw this trust develop rather quickly. Grant and Scott showed trust early on in the relationship and met both

on a professional and personal basis. Their discussions in interviews and focus groups showed that they were willing to be honest with one another about their successes and struggles within the classroom. Sydney and Kenny also developed a strong trust in one another and they both felt comfortable. Kenny specifically noted that he felt his mentor felt comfortable being “vulnerable” during their discussions, showing that this openness and emotional support went both ways between the mentor and mentee. To varying degrees, each of the pairs led the researcher to believe that emotionally, each participant was receiving support from the other in their pairing in order to tackle the stressors associated with teaching.

## **Research Question 2**

What are the key components of the mentor–mentee relationship? Through the participant interviews, focus groups, and participants’ journals, two themes emerged, each producing their own set of key components. The first theme that emerged took into account the mechanics of the mentoring relationship and referred specifically to what activities should take place between the mentor–mentee pairs in order for the relationship to be successful. These activities were more tangible in nature. The second theme that emerged was more intangible in nature and dealt with the emotional aspect of the relationship. The key factors within this theme centered on what conditions needed to be present between the participants in order for the relationship to be collaborative and beneficial to both parties. Both of the themes had one key component that was necessary to facilitate the factors within each: time. Time was a key component in both the mechanical and emotional aspects of the relationship.

**Key mechanical components.** The data generated through this study identified three key activities that each of the mentor–mentee pairs participated in throughout the school year: regular meetings, classroom observations, and collaborative planning. These activities served as critical support structures for the mentees. These activities also provided opportunities for mutual professional growth among each one of the pairs.

The first activity identified as a key component to the mentor–mentee relationship was

regular formal and informal meetings between each pair. Throughout all the interviews, focus groups, and participant journals, meetings between the participant pairs were key mechanisms for providing direct support to the new teachers and giving each participant the ability to reflect on their practices within the classroom. New teachers remarked that they had the opportunity to discuss concerns, seek advice, share best practices, share successes and failures, and collaborate with their mentor during these meetings. The mentors reported that regular meetings with their mentees gave them the opportunity to collaborate, learn new instructional strategies, and increase reflection on their own teaching practice.

The more frequently the pairs met, the more productive and stronger the relationship seemed to be. Grant and Scott each said that they met daily, more on an informal basis. These two participants each commented extensively on how their relationship had progressed from well beyond just being professional colleagues to becoming close friends. Jennifer and Megan also discussed their many informal meetings during lunch and how these meetings gave them a more personal connection with one another. Sydney and Kenny also tended to meet more than once a week because of their work with the school's special education program. Both discussed throughout the study their willingness to share with one another and collaborate closely with respect to providing special education services to students.

Of the five mentor–mentee pairs that participated in the study, one pair reported substantial difficulties in the relationship, especially during the first half of the year. Brad and Katie both stated throughout their interviews, focus groups, and journals that their relationship suffered because of the lack of regular meetings. Their data showed a substantial improvement both on a professional and personal level after the meeting frequency increased. This pair provides a solid example of how important the meeting process was in the overall success of the mentor–mentee relationship.

The second key mechanical activity identified by all of the participants was classroom observations. Each of the five pairs of participants utilized classroom observations as a means to

provide support throughout the school year. These classroom observations served a variety of purposes depending on the needs of the participants. These classroom observations often coincided with the regular meetings held between the mentors and mentees. They utilized the meetings to reflect on the practices observed during the classroom visits. The mentors reported that they utilized the classroom visits to gain an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and classroom management. The mentees reported throughout the school year that they utilized the classroom observations as a means to receive feedback on their current practices and as a diagnostic tool to identify areas of need. Most of the mentees—John, Megan, Kenny, and Scott—reported that they also found it beneficial to visit and observe their mentors' classrooms to see instructional practices being modeled.

Primarily utilized as a support structure for the mentee, these classroom observations provided development opportunities to the mentors as well. Grant, Jennifer, Vicki, and Sydney all stated at various times throughout the interviews that they learned from watching their mentees in the classroom, and that the observations gave them an opportunity to be more reflective concerning their own instructional practices. The mentors reported that they had picked up new instructional strategies and techniques, particularly in the area of instructional technology, which they were then able to incorporate into their own classrooms. This type of reflection was seen as both a mechanism of professional growth and a motivation to continue mentoring new teachers.

Three of the five pairs discussed collaborative lesson planning as an activity that was positive for the mentoring experience. Sydney and Kenny reported that they collaboratively planned lessons and worked together to modify assignments to meet the needs of their special education students. Jennifer and Megan also planned together, working on classroom lessons and activities. Grant and Scott also stated that they had planned together on a regular basis. This joint planning provided a support structure for the new teacher mentees; however, it also allowed the mentors to gain a fresh perspective and incorporate new ideas into their own teaching. The mentors utilized the opportunity to learn new instructional practices and ways to present their subject-matter



material. The common conditions among these three mentor–mentee pairs that aided in facilitating this common planning was that each of the pairs taught similar subject matter and they shared a common planning period.

**Key emotional components.** By the end of the school year, each of the five mentor–mentee pairs found success in their relationships. The participants identified regular meetings, classroom observations, and collaborative planning as activities that they felt were beneficial to their development. The study participants also identified emotional factors that were required in order to facilitate the relationship and enable the mechanical activities of mentoring to happen. These emotional factors were primarily intangible in nature and included communication, trust, respect, collaboration, and openness to each other and the process.

Communication is a key aspect to any relationship. It is important that people are able to communicate their feelings and needs. This is critical in the mentor–mentee relationship. The mentee must be able to communicate their needs to their mentor and the mentor must be able to communicate their expectations to their mentee. The participant pairs each communicated their needs and expectations to one another with varying degrees of success. Three pairs—Vicki and John, Jennifer and Megan, and Grant and Scott—saw communication as a strength in their relationships. Although Sydney did not view the communication between Kenny and herself as a weakness, she did see communicating her expectations to her mentee as having room for improvement in future mentoring relationships. Brad and Katie initially struggled in communicating with each other and made this a priority for improvement during the second half of the year.

The participants each reported that they trusted their relationship counterparts. This was a mutual trust between each mentor and mentee pair. This trust was not immediate in each case and tended to grow stronger over time among the participants. Each of the participants at some point during the study mentioned trust as being a primary factor as to why the relationship was able to expand and grow into a collaborative effort benefiting each party. It is important to note that the

mentors did not serve in any supervisory capacity, and this allowed for a greater comfort level between the mentors and mentees, which tended to aid this development of trust, and in some cases, friendships. Two pairs in particular—Jennifer and Megan along with Grant and Scott—developed friendships outside of their professional relationships. Among these participants, the discussion of trust in one another was elevated. Scott, in particular, really acknowledged his trust in his mentor, stating that Grant “had his back.”

Respect was another emotional aspect that was present among the participants, and it allowed the relationships to grow and be successful professional development opportunities for the participants. All of the mentees expressed that they had some form of respect for their mentors. Most mentees respected their mentor for their experience and willingness to share these experiences with them. Kenny highlighted his respect for his mentor Sydney, and commented on her willingness to share both her good and bad experiences. John felt this same respect for his mentor Vicki. Due to their personal friendships, the respect between mentors Grant and Jennifer and their mentees Scott and Megan transcended the professional level. Brad and Katie were the only participant pair that initially struggled. Although it was never apparent that there was a lack of respect for one another, this relationship progressed slower than the rest, primarily due to the lack of engagement between the two.

Each of the participants characterized their relationships as collaborative in nature. This characteristic of the relationship can be viewed as both tangible and intangible. Collaboration between parties can be viewed in tangible terms, such as with the joint planning of lessons; however, there is also a sense of collaboration that is more emotional rather than arising through some form of physical action. It was clear that four of the five participant pairs had a sense of collaboration on the emotional level. All of the pairs, with the exception of Brad and Katie, worked very well together from early on in the relationship. Brad and Katie’s relationship and collaboration improved as the year progressed, but never reached the collaborative efforts of the other participant pairs. Due to the nature of the special education program, Kenny and Sydney tended to show some

of the strongest professional collaboration, while Grant and Scott, because of their friendship outside of work, showed the highest level of collaboration containing the more emotional aspects of such relationships.

The final common emotional aspect present among the participant pairs was openness to one another and openness to the process. Communication, trust, respect, and collaboration are all traits that help facilitate this openness among the participants and openness to the process. Through mutual respect and trust, the participant pairs were able have a comfort level that promoted a sense of receptiveness to one another's feelings and ideas. This promoted an acceptance of their respective strengths and weaknesses that ultimately led to the collaboration needed to ensure both parties benefitted from the relationship. The participants also had to be open to the process of mentoring as a form of professional development. This openness to the process for the participants was in understanding their roles in the relationship and expanding the development opportunities for each other. Most of the participant pairs showed openness to the process early on. Partly due to a lack of experience and other limiting factors, Brad and Katie initially struggled with this, but improved as the year progressed.

**Time.** Sustained engagement was a common thread that enabled the participant pairs to move their relationships forward and serve as support structures for one another. Both the mechanical activities within the relationship and the emotional aspects required time to cultivate. Those pairs that tended to spend the most time together showed more success than those that did not. Grant and Scott spent the most time together, and their relationship developed beyond a professional nature and grew into a strong friendship. Jennifer and Megan's relationship also saw a similar progression. Although they did not mention a personal aspect to their relationship, Sydney and Kenny developed a strong professional relationship. This was positively correlated to the time that they spent working with one another. Vicki and John spent a significant amount of time together and developed a solid collaborative relationship. Brad and Katie invested the least amount of time into the relationship and this created difficulties in developing a strong, collaborative effort.

As the time commitment between the two increased, they reported improvements in their relationship.

### **Research Question 3**

What factors need to be present for the mentee–mentor relationship to move from a single directional to a bidirectional exchange of information that benefits the practice of both parties? The purpose of this question was to guide the inquiry that would allow the researcher to not only look for patterns of collaboration, but to determine the environmental factors that needed to be present to promote a relationship in which both of the participants benefited professionally. The factors that needed to be present to promote collaboration among the participant pairs were similar to those identified as essential elements to the mentor–mentee relationship, specifically those relating to emotional factors. Through the participant interviews, focus groups, and mentor–mentee journals, three key factors that promoted collaboration emerged. For the relationship to evolve into a collaborative effort that benefits both parties, participants must be open to the mentoring process, be comfortable with their counterpart, and devote the time necessary to cultivate the relationship.

**Open to the process.** Being open to the mentoring process was essential to the development of a relationship that was collaborative in nature and benefitted both the mentee and mentor. There were several characteristics that were indicative of the openness to the process that promoted success among the mentor–mentee relationships. First, active participation in the mechanical aspects of the mentor–mentee relationship was essential to promoting the sense of openness to the process. An example of this active participation was evident in discussions with the study participants and their descriptions of their regular meetings with their counterparts. Sydney and Kenny both described their regular meetings as opportunities to share ideas with one another. Vicki and John also described their meetings in a similar fashion. This sharing of ideas places both parties in an active role of participation in the mentoring process. Grant and Scott along with Jennifer and Megan each described meetings in which they planned lessons together. This is another example of the participants collaborating, with both parties active in that process.

Another aspect of being open to the mentoring process related to the participants viewing one another as a support structure. This support manifested itself inside and outside of the classroom. The mentee participants relied on their mentors to provide some instructional guidance and assistance in putting educational theory into classroom practices. At the same time, the mentors relied on their mentees providing them with new strategies and a deeper understanding of current educational theory. An excellent example of this can be seen through an examination of Sydney and Kenny's relationship. Kenny relied heavily on Sydney for support in understanding the documentation aspects of East End High School's special education program. At the same time, Sydney received a significant amount of guidance and assistance in integrating technology into her classroom. This example demonstrates the participants' reliance on one another as a support structure and their openness to participate in the mentoring process. Each of the participant pairs had similar examples of support that they provided to one another.

The final aspect to participants showing that they were open to the mentoring process involved dedicating the resources for cultivating the relationship. All of the participants dedicated intellectual resources to the relationship. These were in the form of ideas, lesson plans, examples of work, and other intellectual property associated with teaching. The most valuable resource a teacher can provide for others is their time. In most of the participant pairings, significant time was devoted to the relationships, thus cementing the openness in terms of participating in the mentoring process. Brad and Katie was the only pair to have a significant struggle around investing time in their relationship. The lack of investment was damaging to the relationship early on, but improved as the time commitment increased. The study showed a direct correlation between the success of the relationship and the time invested.

**Participants being comfortable with their counterpart.** In order for the mentor–mentee relationship to be successful and one in which both parties benefit from it professionally, the participants must be comfortable working with one another. The comfort level is typically not automatic and takes time to develop. It is about feelings and is intangible in nature. Being

comfortable with someone requires several factors to be in place. The participants of this study showed a significant comfort level with their counterparts. The factors present in these relationships that led to the development of a strong comfort level were a sense of openness with one another, trust, and mutual respect.

Throughout the study, participants reported that they felt that their counterparts were willing to be open about their feelings and needs. This sense of openness about feelings and needs seemed to be appreciated by the participants. Grant and Scott both reported this sense of openness in one another. Grant felt comfortable with Scott and appreciated how he was willing to share some of his past professional experiences as a lawyer. Scott felt he could discuss “anything” with Grant. These two participants formed a close friendship outside of work, which aided in their professional comfort level. Jennifer and Megan, who also developed a friendship outside of school, both shared in their discussions that they experienced openness in terms of each other’s feelings and needs. Kenny referred to the openness on the part of his mentor Sydney as “vulnerability.” Kenny saw Sydney as being open about the realities of teaching as both a positive and negative experience. Sydney also acknowledged this, and even thought that, at times, she should have reframed her negative information so that she did not “turn Kenny off” from teaching. Vicki and John were not as explicit in acknowledging that they shared feelings, but they did comment on sharing their needs with one another. Even though Brad and Katie’s relationship struggled during the first part of the year, elements of the openness were still present, specifically when Katie expressed to Brad her fears in dealing with difficult parents. Brad responded to this need by assisting Katie with a parent–teacher conference.

Trust was another important factor in the relationship becoming collaborative in nature and beneficial to both parties. Each of the participants throughout the study acknowledged that they trusted their counterpart. One reason that the mentees were able to develop a sense of trust in their mentors was because the relationship was not supervisory in nature. The mentors were a support structure and had no bearing on the mentees’ performance evaluations. Scott specifically

mentioned this in his interviews and during a focus group session. He was particularly concerned about his probationary status and that he saw Grant as an advocate and support structure. John also commented on this. Both Scott and John had transitioned from other careers and this most likely was a factor in these feelings. The openness previously discussed helped the participants to grow to trust one another. These two factors were closely related. As the participants trusted one another, they were open to discussing their experiences and feelings. Conversely, because the participants were open with one another, their sense of trust increased.

Finally, mutual respect allowed the participants to be comfortable with one another and assisted the relationships to develop into ones that were collaborative in nature. It was clear from the interviews, focus groups, and participant journaling that the mentee participants respected their mentors for their experience and abilities as teachers. They also expressed respect concerning the mentors choosing to provide support to new teachers. John commented multiple times throughout the study about how “grateful” he was that Vicki chose to share her skills with him. Megan echoed this sentiment about her mentor Jennifer. Kenny commented several times about Sydney’s experience, and how much he respected her for the work that she had done with students. The mentors also voiced how they respected their mentees. Grant specifically mentioned how he respected Scott for some of his past career accomplishments as an attorney. Vicki acknowledged her respect for John “going beyond his comfort zone” in transitioning to teaching as a career. Sydney provided examples of her respect for Kenny and his abilities to “help kids.” Throughout the study, it was evident that respect was common among the participants and that it was critical to the successes within the relationships.

**Time devoted to the relationship.** As previously noted, time is a valuable resource to a teacher when considering all of the demands that are placed upon them. Finding time to devote to the mentoring relationship was challenging for some of the participant pairs. Three of the pairs each shared at least one planning period with one another. This allowed for a natural time during which to meet and collaborate. Two participant pairs—John and Vicki along with Brad and

Katie—found it difficult to find the time to devote to the mentoring relationship. John and Vicki found it easier than Brad and Katie to deal with the lack of time. John and Vicki were able to overcome the issue of time by dedicating time to meetings outside of their normal duty days. Brad and Katie saw the lack of a common planning period and its relationship to the time available for the relationship as a significant hurdle. Due to the lack of time, their relationship did not evolve as positively as it did for the rest of the participants. Only after they committed to investing more time to the relationship, did it improve. Ensuring there is significant time to devote to the mentor–mentee relationship must be a priority to the parties involved and an element that the school administration must be cognitive of in order to assist in the facilitation of the relationship.

### **Discussion of Findings and Implications for Practice**

This study allowed for a close examination of five mentor–mentee pairs consisting of a first-year teacher and their assigned mentor. Understanding how this relationship evolves over time and becomes a collaborative effort in which both parties benefit is critical so that school administrators understand how pairings should be made and what types of structures need to be in place to assist in ensuring successful relationships. In chapter two, the Review of the Literature, the research was examined that helped to identify the role of mentoring in the professional development of teachers and how mentoring is integrated into a comprehensive teacher-induction program. Through interviews, focus groups, and participant journaling, the researcher was able to understand the role that mentoring plays in the professional development of the study participants.

### **Andragogy and the Study Participants**

The theoretical lens used to examine the mentoring process in this study was andragogy and the adult learning theory (Knowles et al., 2011). Knowles et al. (2011) presented six key assumptions through the concept of andragogy. First, adult learners have a self-concept and are responsible for decisions and their own lives (Knowles et al., 2011). The new teachers and their mentors were assigned to each other by the school administration and had little to no input on their pairings. This decision was out of their control. Although the pairings were out of their control, the



participants had complete control over how they conducted themselves within the relationship. Each of the participants actively participated in the relationship and made their interactions with one another opportunities for professional growth. Most of the mentor–mentee participants actively engaged with each other and worked to build a solid relationship that was collaborative in nature.

The second assumption associated with andragogy is that adults bring varied experiences, both in terms of quality and quantity, having consequences on their education (Knowles et al., 2011). This was true with the participants of this study, both with the mentors and mentees. With the mentors, each had varying levels of education, experience in the classroom, and time mentoring new teachers. Sydney had over 40 years of teaching experience and had mentored many teachers in the past, while Brad had less than six years of experience in the classroom and this was his first time mentoring a new teacher. Brad's lack of experience hindered his interactions with Katie early on because he failed to realize the time commitment necessary to cultivate a successful relationship. The mentees also brought this varied experience and education to the relationships. Two of the participants had professional experience outside of teaching and this influenced their interaction with their mentors and their performance in the classroom. Three of the mentees had previous classroom experience and knowledge of educational theory through their college programs. This influenced their interactions with their mentors and created an opportunity for the experienced teachers to be given an opportunity to learn about current educational theory and practices.

The third assumption presented by Knowles et al. (2011) was the idea that adults understand and have a readiness to learn based on their need and on the applicability of the knowledge to real-life situations. The mentoring relationships provided the study participants with direct means to address their professional development needs and the experiences transferred directly to their practice as teachers. The mentees received guidance, modeling, instructional strategies, and other means of support. The mentors also received support from the mentees and most reported that it had helped to renew their practice as teachers.

The fourth assumption associated with andragogy is that adult learners are typically driven

by tasks or problems (Knowles et al., 2011). The practice of teaching is made up of a series of tasks or problems, and the mentor–mentee relationships that were studied provided the support structures that were designed to help address these issues. The mentees would discuss problems they were having in their classroom with management, instruction, or other issues, and the mentors would help them work through solutions. Mentees would also assist their mentors in working through similar issues or problems. One example of this relates to Kenny assisting his mentor Sydney in developing Smart Board lessons after she expressed an interest to him of wanting to incorporate more instructional technology into her classroom. Another example concerns Scott assisting his mentor Grant in planning lessons that dealt with legal principals. Scott was able to put his previous experience as an attorney to use to assist his mentor in planning classroom instruction.

The fifth and sixth assumptions concern an adult learner's need to know something and their motivation to learn it (Knowles et al., 2011). The mentor–mentee relationships in this study provided examples of adult learners who were motivated to learn from one another things that they needed to know to improve their abilities to be effective classroom teachers. The mentees consistently reached out to the mentors to learn important aspects of their jobs. Kenny reached out to Sydney when he had difficulty in understanding what type of documentation was necessary in the special education program. He was motivated to learn this so he could effectively service his students. The mentors also reached out to their mentees in a similar fashion. Grant needed assistance from Scott in developing lessons that effectively conveyed complicated legal subjects to his students. Grant was motivated to accomplish this so that his students mastered and had the ability to apply the legal concepts.

### **Mentoring and Professional Development**

The desire to want to continue to grow as a professional and to model lifelong learning are characteristics of most teachers (Webster-Wright, 2009). The mentoring relationships observed during this study provided a means of professional development for both parties involved. Through the collaborative nature of the relationships, both the mentee and mentor received crucial support

that aided them in being successful in the classroom (Desimone, 2009; Penuel et al., 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009).

Quality professional development provides several key support structures for both new and experienced educators. The mentoring relationship was successful in addressing many of these required support structures. For the new teacher, quality professional development should provide a bridge that closes the gap between what has been learned in teacher preparation programs and what is required in actual classroom practice (Nahal, 2010). Through the interviews, focus groups, and participant journaling, it was clear that the mentoring relationships assisted in bridging this gap. The mentors provided support in instruction, classroom management, and administrative needs—areas underserved by the traditional teacher preparation programs. The mentors were able to assist their mentees with a variety of situations and provided guidance on difficult problems (Desimone, 2009; Nahal, 2010; Penuel et al., 2007).

Both the mentees and mentors benefitted from the collaborative nature of the studied relationships. Teachers tend to find themselves working in isolation, especially at the high school level. Professional development provides opportunities for teachers to work together and develop a sense of collegiality with and among their peers (Abdullah, 2009; Bieler, 2012; Nahal, 2010). The five mentor–mentee pairs in this study each reported their relationships as being collaborative in nature. These relationships provided the participants with the chance to work with one another as colleagues and with opportunities to learn from their peers. This opportunity to work with and learn from peers fits well within the theoretical lens of andragogy and with the transfer of knowledge between adult learners (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Knowles et al., 2011).

### **Mentoring and Teacher Induction**

The Central County School System and East End High School provide a new teacher-induction program for first-year teachers. The two primary components of this induction program are a weeklong in-service period of training prior to the beginning of school, and new teachers being assigned a mentor to serve as a support structure throughout the duration of the school year.

For mentoring to be a successful component in new teacher-induction programs, the relationship must provide new teachers with key support structures.

Mentors should engage in a variety of activities designed to provide support to their new teacher mentees. These activities include observations, collaborative planning, and modeling lessons (Helman, 2006; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Each of the participant pairs reported that observations were conducted. The mentors reported regular observations of their mentees and most of the mentees reported that they had had opportunities to observe their mentors. These observations provided opportunities for reflection and modeling. Two of the pairs—Grant and Scott along with Jennifer and Megan—reported that they had regularly planned lessons together.

The type of support needed by the new teachers also includes emotional support (Griffin, 2010). Mentees may need their mentors to serve as sounding boards, provide structure, set expectations, and serve as advocates for them (Certo, 2005). Each of the participant pairs reported activities that involved these emotional aspects of the relationships. Some of the pairs had stronger emotional ties than others. It was clear that most relied on each other for this type of support. The mentors and mentees received emotional support from each other.

Dedicating the time necessary to provide the support structures and cultivating a collaborative relationship are important aspects for the success of mentoring as a component of new teacher-induction programs (Griffin, 2010). This requires dedication to the process on the part of both the mentee and mentor. Four of the five participant pairs in this study reported that they were able to devote the time necessary to building a strong, collaborative relationship. Brad and Katie was the only participant pair to report that the lack of time for meetings had negatively affected their relationship. The relationship improved as the time dedicated to the process increased. Vicki and John reported how it was difficult to find the time because they lacked a common planning period. Although it was difficult, this pair managed to set aside the time necessary to cultivate the relationship. All of the participant pairs recommended that mentors and mentees should have time set aside to meet, noting that no meetings took place prior to the start of school.

### **Qualities of an Effective Mentor**

The mentoring that the new teacher participants received over the 2012–2013 school year was their primary means of professional development. It was critical that these new teachers had a quality mentor to learn from. To be an effective mentor, there must be a certain level of experience so that the mentor may draw from experience and transfer lessons learned to their mentee (Moir & Gless, 2001; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). For the most part, each of the mentors in the participant pairs within this study were experienced educators who had previously mentored other new teachers. Sydney had the most experience and it was evident that she was comfortable in her role as a mentor. She was able to communicate with Kenny effectively, passing on advice, giving guidance, and listening intently to his needs as a new special education teacher. Vicki, Grant, and Jennifer also showed maturity as mentors, responding to the needs of their mentees. Brad struggled with the relationship. He was not aware of the time commitment that was necessary for cultivating a successful relationship and, because of this, his relationship with Katie suffered, especially during the first half of the school year.

Communication between the mentor and mentee is critical to the success of the relationship (Wood & Stanulis, 2010). All of the participants acknowledged communication as an important aspect of the relationship that assisted in creating a more collaborative venture. Each of the mentors was able to communicate with their mentees with varying degrees of success. Again, because of her vast experience, Sydney seemed to have great success communicating with Kenny, addressing his needs, and providing ways for him to communicate effectively with parents and other stakeholders. Grant and Jennifer were able to communicate well with their mentees and, because of a shared interest, were able to develop friendships outside of their professional roles. Vicki communicated well with John and built a solid professional rapport with him. Brad, because of the lack of time invested into the relationship, struggled to maintain regular communication with Katie. This lack of communication was counter-productive to building a solid, collaborative relationship.

For mentors to ensure that the relationship moves forward and serves as an important aspect

in terms of the professional growth of new teachers, mentors must be committed to the mentoring process (Feinman-Nemser, 2001). Vicki, Jennifer, Sydney, and Grant each showed a deep commitment to their mentees. These mentors worked very hard to develop a strong relationship from the very beginning. They ensured that they met with their mentees on a regular basis, provided opportunities for modeling lessons, advised on classroom management, and performed regular observations that included reflective feedback. All of these activities are seen as important functions of a mentor (Feinman-Nemser, 2005; Stanulis et al., 2007; Whitaker, 2004; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Brad initially struggled with these functions because of his lack of engagement with Katie. However, Brad was able to help turn the relationship around after making the commitment to meet more frequently and engage in development opportunities. This commitment to the process was important to all of the mentors and allowed for the development of collaborative, mutually beneficial relationships among the participant pairs (Feinman-Nemser, 2005).

### **Relationships Beneficial to Both the Mentee and Mentor**

The primary purpose of the mentoring program at East End High School is to provide critical support to new, first-year teachers. Although the primary purpose of these mentoring relationships is to support new teachers, the mentors also benefit from these interactions. The mentors only receive financial compensation for mentoring if they are National Board Certified (McKenzie, 2012). None of the mentor participants in this study met the National Board Certification criteria and were not paid a stipend to assist the new teachers. The mentors were intrinsically motivated to assist new teachers and the rewards were primarily intangible.

The mentor participants reported that working with their new teacher mentees provided a sense of renewal in their own instructional practice and provided an opportunity to be reflective regarding their own teaching. This self-reflection and sense of renewal allows for the mentors to gain new perspectives and knowledge from working with their new teacher mentees (Coates, 2012; Storms & Lee, 2001). The mentors were able to observe their mentees and view new, fresh approaches to presenting ideas and content. All of the mentors reported how they were able to

adapt some of the methods that were presented by their mentees and use them in their own classrooms. This provided a sense of instructional support for the mentors as a result of their work with the mentees.

Both parties in the participant pairs benefitted from the reported collaborative nature of the relationships. Participating in a collaborative relationship helps the new teacher mentee work collectively with someone to overcome issues they are having with the practice of teaching and allows for the mentor to feel useful in their role in assisting someone move forward in their career (Holloway, 2001). Collaboration allows both parties to move forward in their practice as teachers because they are working together to solve problems. Throughout all of the interviews, focus groups, and participant journaling, each of the participants discussed this sense of collaboration and approaching problems together in some depth. Although Brad and Katie struggled the most to develop their mentor–mentee relationship, they still talked about collaborative interactions and how this benefitted them both.

### **Summary of the Implications for Practice**

The study provided an opportunity to see what the research had identified as key factors to a mentor–mentee relationship in practice. Each of the five participant pairs that were studied showed success in their relationships to varying degrees. Those that struggled the most also invested the least amount of time in cultivating the relationship. It was clear that participating in the mentor–mentee relationship involved a large commitment from both parties. This commitment, however, provided critical support for both the mentee and mentor. The new teachers were given opportunities to learn how to put theory into practice and the mentors were given the opportunity to be reflective in their own practice while gaining insight into current trends within education.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Study**

#### **Limitations**

This study had a number of limitations that, if expanded upon for future research, could provide opportunities to learn more about the dynamics of effective mentoring relationships in the

area of teacher induction and professional development. The first limitation lay with the participants who were chosen for this study. Each of the participants taught at the high school level in grades 9–12. All of the participants were in teaching positions at East End High School. The mentee participants were required to be in their first year of teaching and could not have prior experience in the classroom other than that gained in their teacher preparation programs. The new teachers could have either a professional or a temporary, three-year teaching certificate. The mentors were all professionally credentialed teachers with at least three years of teaching experience. The mentor–mentee pairing was completed by the school’s administration. The school’s administration identified possible study participants and the researcher contacted only those who had been identified to solicit their participation.

Another limitation for this study was its location. All of the participants were teachers at East End High School, a comprehensive high school located in a suburban area of Central Florida. The school had a large student population, large faculty, and occupied a large physical plant. The school was a part of the Central County School District, which has schools in both suburban and rural areas of Central Florida.

The researcher, due to the lack of geographical proximity, was limited in the types of interactions that were possible with the mentor–mentee participants. All of the interviews and focus groups required the use of video conferencing software and programs. The interviews were conducted one-on-one using Skype, and the focus groups were conducted separately with the group of mentors and the group of mentees utilizing the web-based video-chat program, Google Chat. There were no in-person meetings between the researcher and participants. Due to the lack of geographical proximity, the researcher was not able to observe the mentors and mentees working together.

Another limitation created by the lack of geographical proximity was the lack of personal interactions between the researcher and participants. Although the researcher and participants could see each other through the video-chat programs, the chance of missing subtle cues and certain body



language cues was present. The researcher had to primarily rely on the willingness of the participants to be completely candid in their responses. The researcher was not able to be “close” to the participants as they worked and could not personally observe the types of support that were being provided in the relationships.

The final limitation was evident in the literature regarding the mutual benefits of a mentoring program within the teaching field. Most of the research describes the benefits of mentoring for the mentee but few describe how this relationship can be equally beneficial to the mentor. The research concerning the benefits of mentoring for the mentor lies in other professions such as the medical and business fields.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

The limitations of this study and those found within the literature have led the researcher to make several recommendations for future study. First, a more comprehensive view of the mentoring of new teachers could be obtained by increasing the types of teachers involved in future studies. This study only examined teachers that taught at the high school level in grades 9–12. Other subgroups of teachers should be studied to see if the grade level taught has an effect on the mentoring relationship. A study could examine new elementary teachers and their mentors or new middle school teachers and their mentors. Research involving a cross section of new teachers from all grades, kindergarten through 12, could provide a comparison of these relationships and how they evolve over time.

Similar to the limitation concerning the participants who were studied, the understanding of mentor–mentee relationships could be increased by moving beyond just one school, thus increasing the scope of the research to multiple schools across several districts. This would create the chance to be able to compare experiences of mentors and mentees across several areas. This comparison would allow school administrators to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their programs and make changes to positively affect the outcomes of the relationships.

This study examined formal mentor–mentee relationships. The researcher acknowledges

that many teachers may have informal mentors who assist in their professional growth. These relationships should also be examined so that the roles that they may play in the professional development of new and experienced teachers are better understood. Understanding these relationship roles could assist school administrators in creating environments that promote this type of development.

Finally, more focus needs to be directed through research on the benefits of the practice of mentoring for the mentor. Clear understandings of the positive benefits for the mentor need to be identified. Understanding these benefits could assist school administrators in the recruitment and retention of quality mentors. This understanding could also assist in pairing mentors and mentees for optimal success and could also have a bearing on the structure of mentor–mentee programs. If school administrators understand how the relationships serve as support structures for both the mentees and mentors, programs could be designed to better reflect the needs of both parties.

### **Conclusion and Opportunities for Improvements**

#### **Conclusion**

This qualitative, grounded theory study examined the mentoring relationship between first-year novice teachers and their experienced mentors. Through interviews, focus groups, and participant journaling, the researcher was able to understand how the relationship developed over time and served as a professional development activity that was mutually beneficial to both parties. Through this examination, it was clear that certain factors needed to be in place for the relationship to evolve into one that was collaborative in nature.

First, both parties needed to be committed to the mentoring process. It was important that both the mentor and mentee saw the process as a source for professional growth, and that they actively participated in cultivating the relationship. The mentor must be active in the relationship by providing support structures and activities that are conducive to promoting the growth of their mentee. The mentors must commit to regular meetings, observations, and time to reflect on the practices of the mentee. The mentee must also provide opportunities for the mentor to help them

with their development. The mentees must be willing to share their experiences in the classroom, be willing to discuss successes and difficulties, and openly communicate their needs to their mentors.

For the mentoring relationship to be successful, the parties must be comfortable with each other. This comfort level typically develops over time and can vary among mentor–mentee pairs. Key factors that need to be in place to facilitate this comfort level are open communication, trust, honesty, and mutual respect. Through openly communicating needs and expectations, the mentors and mentees can ensure that they are effectively assisting each other. Open communication also aids in developing a sense of trust among the participants. Trust is essential if the participants are going to be honest with each other about their needs and feelings. A mentor must be honest with a new teacher about their progress, and about what they recognize as their strengths and their opportunities for growth. The mentee must be honest with the mentor about their successes and struggles. Ultimately, if the participants openly communicate with one another and develop a sense of trust facilitated through honesty, then the two parties grow to respect each other for their professional and personal contributions.

Finally, both the mentors and mentees must commit the time that is necessary to facilitate the cultivation of successful relationships. It was clear through this study that not committing the time necessary to meet regularly, conduct observations, and reflect on teaching practice hindered the chances of the relationship being successful. Brad and Katie provided an example of how the failure to commit resources such as time to the relationship hinders growth opportunities for both parties. As they worked to improve the issue and began to devote more time to the relationship, improvements were notable in their interpersonal relationship and in the opportunities for development that they afforded each other.

### **Opportunities for Improvements**

Throughout the discussions with the mentor and mentee participants, a number of opportunities for improvements emerged. These are opportunities for the administration to examine

the practices and procedures that are in place to facilitate the mentoring process at East End High School. Even though these recommendations are specific to East End High School, they are applicable to any mentoring program that is similarly structured.

Pairing participants together who teach similar subjects is important, especially at the high school level. High school teachers tend to be compartmentalized and consider themselves as subject-matter experts. With two of the participant pairs in this study, the fact that they did not teach the same subject matter created difficulties in certain situations and somewhat limited the type of support they could provide to each other. These two pairs did not report planning lessons together, and each of the mentors commented that they struggled to support their mentee within the content area. School administrators must be aware of this, and attempt to pair mentors and mentees together with subject-matter expertise as a factor to use in their decisions.

It is important that school administrators check in regularly with the mentors and mentees to see how the relationship is progressing and ensure that each party is receiving adequate support. The mentor participants in this study particularly mentioned that they would have liked the school administration to be more “hands on” with monitoring the relationships. This must be balanced, however, and not seen as intrusive. The mentees must feel that the relationship is a safe place for them to be honest and express themselves. The mentors do not need to be viewed as extensions of the supervision provided by the school administration.

Mentoring is a large task to undertake, even for the most seasoned teacher. It is important that these mentors feel appreciated and rewarded. Financial compensation for the hours invested into the relationship outside of the normal duty day should be available to all teachers that choose to mentor, not just those that are National Board Certified. The need for mentors out numbers those with National Board certification. The obligation is the same regardless of National Board status and all teachers should be compensated for their time when they undertake an endeavor such as mentoring. The cost of providing a mentor is far less than the money needed to replace a teacher because the leave the profession because of the lack of adequate support.

Finally, the school administration must provide adequate time for the mentors and mentees to develop the relationship. Two of the participant pairs in this relationship did not share any common planning time. This caused significant issues in one of the pairs and affected their ability to devote time to cultivating an optimally successful relationship. The pairing of mentors and mentees must not be an after-thought. Administrators must keep these pairings in mind when developing teaching schedules so that they capitalize on the planning periods to create time for the mentors and mentees to meet. They must also ensure that time is given to teachers before school starts to meet and become acquainted with one another. This will allow the mentors and mentees to start the year off successfully and begin working toward a collaborative and cohesive relationship early on.

Choosing to educate is a profession that brings many rewards and challenges. It is critical that those new to the profession to receive the support they need so they may successfully serve their students. Choosing to mentor a new teacher offers its own set of rewards for those that venture to undertake this endeavor. It is important that school and district administrations ensure they provide a support structure for both the new teachers and their mentors. In many cases, this mentoring is the front line defense and support structure to help ensure new teachers are successful and remain in the profession, ultimately saving school districts thousands of dollars. Putting forth a strong effort at the beginning of a new teacher's career can ultimately lead to increased success throughout. As Benjamin Franklin once said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

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## Appendix A IRB Approval

### IRB Approval



The Graduate School at Liberty University

October 18, 2012

David Martin

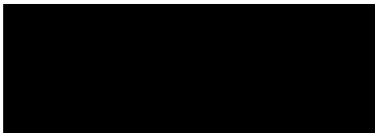
IRB Approval 1426.101812: Mentoring as a Form of Professional Development: A Grounded Theory Study to Examine How the Relationship between the Mentor and Mentee Becomes Mutually Beneficial

Dear David,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



Professor, IRB Chair  
Counseling

(434) 592-4054



Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

## **Appendix B Informed Consent**

### **Informed Consent Form**

#### **Research Participant Information and Consent Form Liberty University EdD Dissertation for Educational Leadership**

**Title of the Study:** MENTORING AS A FORM OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY TO EXAMINING HOW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MENTOR AND MENTEE BECOMES MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL

**Student Researcher:** David Martin

Ph: 931-614-4226      email:      dmartin6@liberty.edu

My name is David Martin and you are being invited to participate in a research study designed to determine how the relationship between a new teacher and their assigned mentor evolves and changes throughout the school year. Participation is completely voluntary. At the end of the study, in appreciation for your participation, I will provide you with a \$100.00 gift card.

#### **Background Information**

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to generate a theory of how the relationship evolves between first year teachers and their assigned mentors in Central Florida from that of a one-way exchange of information to a sharing of ideas where both benefit from the relationship.

The following research question will guide my study:

The over-arching question is how do first year, K-12 teachers and their assigned mentors move their relationship from one in which the novice educator only receives advice and guidance from the veteran teacher to a relationship in which there is an exchange of ideas that benefits the practice of both parties?

#### **Procedures**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

- Participate in 3 interviews lasting 45-60 in length. Interviews will take place once each academic quarter.
- Enter thoughts and reflections on a bi-weekly basis into an electronic journal which will be provided. Entries are brief, 2-3 paragraphs each and prompting questions will be provided.
- Participate in two focus group meetings with other like participants (other mentors or other first year teachers). These should last 45-60 minutes in length.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

**The study has the following risks:**

- The risks are minimal; however, sharing personal perceptions may cause negative emotions or anxious feelings. You may choose to withdraw at any point during the study.

**The benefits of participation are:**

- This study is an attempt to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in educational leadership research.
- As a participant, you will be given the opportunity to share your mentee/mentor experience providing information that can help improve the process.

### **Compensation**

- \$100.00 gift card.

### **Confidentiality:**

- The records will be kept secure and confidential.
- Your name will never be used within the study.
- Your school's name will never be used in the study.
- Your school districts name will never be used in the study.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

- Participation in this study is voluntary.
- Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Liberty University.
- If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### **Whom Should I Contact If I Have Questions?**

- You may ask any questions about the research at any time.
- Your participation is completely voluntary.
- If you begin participation and change your mind you may end your participation at any time without penalty.

If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact the researcher at:

David Martin (931) 614-4226      Email: [drmartin6@liberty.edu](mailto:drmartin6@liberty.edu)

Dr. Carol Mowen, Chair      Email: [cmowen@liberty.edu](mailto:cmowen@liberty.edu)

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the

Human Subject Office  
1971 University Blvd, Suite 2400  
Lynchburg, VA 24502

or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

***You will receive a copy of this form for your records.***

### **STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT**

I have had the opportunity to read the above information and had an opportunity to ask any questions about r participation in this research. I voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

---

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission to be quoted directly in publications without using my name.  
(participant's initials)



## Appendix C Permission to Conduct Research

### Permission to Conduct Research



August 15, 2012

Institutional Review Board  
Liberty University  
1971 University Blvd.  
Lynchburg, VA 24502

Re: [REDACTED] letter of cooperation

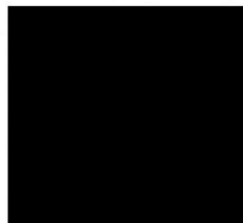
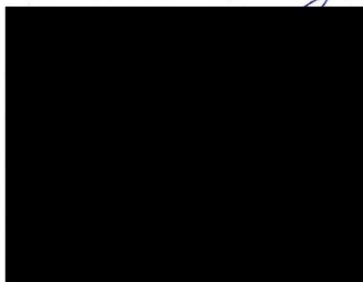
Greetings IRB board members,

Please accept this letter of cooperation as intent to assist David Martin with his doctoral dissertation by allowing him to use [REDACTED] as a research site. After reviewing Mr. Martin's research proposal, we feel this project could provide our school with information that would be very helpful in improving our mentoring program for new teachers.

We agree to provide Mr. Martin with the contact information of our new teachers and their mentors so that he may solicit their participation in the study. Their participation would be completely voluntary and the school will not require any teacher or employee to take part in the study. It is also understood that all participants will remain confidential through the use of pseudonyms and the school will be referred to as a large, comprehensive high school in central Florida.

We look forward to Mr. Martin conducting his research in our school. Please contact me if you need any further information.

Respectfully,



## Appendix D Focus Group Number One-Mentors

## Focus Group Number One-Mentors

Date:

Start Time:

End Time:

### Participants Present:

- Wait for at least five minutes after the start time if everyone has not logged in
- Greet and welcome all of the participants
- Set ground rules: be respectful, wait for others to stop talking before someone else starts, it is okay to veer away from guiding questions
- Have the participants introduce themselves and share some background information
- Begin with guiding questions

### Guiding Questions for the mentor participants

1. Why did you decide to mentor this year?
2. What role do you feel mentoring plays in a first year teacher?
3. What elements do you think are important to have in the mentor/mentee relationship?
4. What are some activities that you are doing with your mentee?
5. Which do you think are most effective in their development?
6. Are there any that you think are not effective?
7. How has this relationship with your mentee been progressing?
8. What are some hopes for this relationship and how do you see yourself ensuring it's a positive experience? (Go around to everyone)

### Guiding questions for observational notes

1. What are some central themes that emerged from this focus group?
2. What anything said that was unclear or confusing?
3. Where there any behavior observations that would not be apparent from the transcript?
4. What issues need follow-up?

## Appendix E Focus Group Number One-Mentees

### Focus Group Number One-Mentees

Date:

Start Time:

End Time:

### Participants Present:

- Wait for at least five minutes after the start time if everyone has not logged in
- Greet and welcome all of the participants
- Set ground rules: be respectful, wait for others to stop talking before someone else starts, it is okay to veer away from guiding questions
- Have the participants introduce themselves and share some background information
- Begin with guiding questions

### Guiding Questions for the mentor participants

1. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
2. What elements do you think are important to have in the mentor/mentee relationship?
3. What are some activities that you are doing with your mentor?
4. Which do you think are most effective in your development?
5. Are there any that you think are not effective?
6. How has this relationship with your mentee been progressing?
7. What are some hopes for this relationship and how do you see yourself ensuring it's a positive experience? (Go around to everyone)

### Guiding questions for observational notes

1. What are some central themes that emerged from this focus group?
2. What anything said that was unclear or confusing?
3. Where there any behavior observations that would not be apparent from the transcript?
4. What issues need follow-up?

## **Appendix F Focus Group Number Two-Mentors**

### Focus Group Number Two-Mentors

Date:                                      Start Time:                                      End Time:

#### Participants Present:

- A. Wait for at least five minutes after the start time if everyone has not logged in
- B. Greet and welcome all of the participants
- C. Set ground rules: be respectful, wait for others to stop talking before someone else starts, it is okay to veer away from guiding questions
- D. Begin with guiding questions

#### Guiding Questions for the mentor participants

1. What kind of growth have you seen with your mentees and how do you think your relationship with them has helped facilitate their growth?
2. Thinking about the relationship, what elements on an interpersonal level were necessary to ensure the relationship was successful?
3. Throughout my interviews with each of you, each characterized the relationship as collaborative and that your mentees learned from you and you learned from this. Why do you think this was able to occur?
4. Looking back at this experience, how has this relationship benefited you and your professional growth?
5. How could the school, specifically its administration, do a better job of supporting the mentor/mentee relationships?

#### Guiding questions for observational notes

1. What are some central themes that emerged from this focus group?
2. What anything said that was unclear or confusing?
3. Where there any behavior observations that would not be apparent from the transcript?
4. What issues need follow-up?

## Appendix G Focus Group Number Two-Mentee

## Focus Group Number Two-Mentee

Date:

Start Time:

End Time:

### Participants Present:

- Wait for at least five minutes after the start time if everyone has not logged in
- Greet and welcome all of the participants
- Set ground rules: be respectful, wait for others to stop talking before someone else starts, it is okay to veer away from guiding questions
- Begin with guiding questions

### Guiding Questions for the mentor participants

1. What kind of growth have you seen in yourself as a teacher so far and how do you think your relationship your mentor has helped facilitate their growth?
2. Thinking about the relationship, what elements on an interpersonal level were necessary to ensure the relationship was successful?
3. Throughout my interviews with each of you, each characterized the relationship as collaborative? Why do you think this collaboration was able to occur?
4. Looking back at this experience, how has this relationship benefited you and your professional growth?
5. How could the school, specifically its administration, do a better job of supporting the mentor/mentee relationships?

### Guiding questions for observational notes

1. What are some central themes that emerged from this focus group?
2. What anything said that was unclear or confusing?
3. Where there any behavior observations that would not be apparent from the transcript?
4. What issues need follow-up?

## Appendix H Electronic Journal Instructions

### Electronic Journal Instructions

- a) Participants are asked to make at least one entry on a bi-weekly basis reflecting on their mentoring relationship using a Microsoft Word document.
- b) Participants are asked to use the guiding questions when needed to assist in their reflection.
- c) Please keep your journal running, using a date to delineate your entries.
- d) Please save your journal entries using this file format, name\_journalentry\_date, using a two digit month, two digit day, and two digit year. Example, DavidMartin\_journalentry\_100312
- e) Please email your journal entries to the researcher at least once every two weeks. Use the email [david@davidrichardmartin.com](mailto:david@davidrichardmartin.com)
- f) If needed you may use the following questions to guide your response. You do not have to use these questions and can discuss any aspect of the mentoring relationship you would like.

#### Guiding Questions

1. What was your interaction, if any, with your mentee/mentor?
2. How did this interaction make you feel, how could this interaction have been made better?
3. What do you believe you are learning most from your mentee/mentor?

#### Example of a journal entry

10/03/2012

Today I had a meeting with my mentor, Janet. We discussed a recent observation of my Biology class. I thought the class had gone really well. Janet said she enjoyed the class but, was able to give me some great pointers to use in grouping my students together for labs. It is really nice having her come into my classroom for observations. She always has some great advice that I can apply. Over the last couple of weeks, I have been a bit nervous because my first evaluation of the year is coming up. Janet has been really helpful in putting my nerves at ease. Tomorrow we are supposed to get together to look at my lesson plan I am going to be using during the upcoming evaluation. I am sure you will have some good advice for me.

**Special Note:** Make as many journal entries as you want and submit them as often as you want. Every two weeks would be a minimum.

Thanks for your assistance with this study and I look forward to reading your entries. I urge you to be as candid as possible with your entries.

## Appendix I Sample Interview Transcript

Interview Transcript: Initial Mentor

Date: November 6, 2012

Participant: 005 "Sydney"

Conducted By: David Martin, Researcher

Transcribed by: Kelly Martin

Interview Start Time: 22:00 Central Europe Time

Interview Complete Time: 22:22 Central Europe Time

Interview was conducted using Skype and audio recorded.

*\*Note, any reference to the participant's actual name has been changed in the transcript to reflect their pseudonym.*

DM=David Martin

S=005 Sydney

DM: Hi Sydney, how are you doing this evening?

S: I am doing well, just finished a long day.

DM: I know what you mean, it's 10:00PM here, it's been a long for me. I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me.

S: No Problem, it's my pleasure.

DM: Well this is the first time we have had the chance to sit down and really discuss your mentor-mentee relationship with Kenny. I have eight questions to ask you in this initial interview. Feel free to elaborate as much as you would like. I expect the interview to last about 30 minutes and I will be recording this interview so that I can transcribe it later. Does that sound okay with you?

S: Sounds fine with me.

DM: Okay, well let's get started then. My first questions deals with your prior experience. What previous professional experience do you have prior to becoming a teacher?

S: Well, I worked as a legal secretary while I was in college. After I graduated with a liberal arts degree in psychology and sociology, I was a buyer and salesperson for high-end women's clothing store. On both jobs I learned how to deal with the public, and in the sales

position I learned how to sell a product. Both of these skills have served me well in the teaching profession.

- DM: Ah nice, I actually worked as a legal assistance for a personal injury law firm while I was in college and I gained a lot of experience in that position that helped me when I became a teacher several years later. So in those experiences or as a teacher, have you ever had a formal relationship with a mentor? If so, can you explain the context of those relationships?
- S: When I began teaching in 1969 Louisiana was desperate for certified teachers in their public schools. The Louisiana public schools were federally forced to integrate and numerous certified teachers moved to the private schools or retired. The state decided to hire anyone with a degree. I was hired as a PE teacher because I was tall, and I would agree to share an office with a 60 year old black coach. This man taught me more about teaching and teaching techniques than all the education classes I took to earn an education certificate. I was 20 years old and did not have a clue what to do in a newly integrated school that was all black due to white flight. The only thing that got me through the experience was an excellent mentor.
- DM: Wow, I can imagine that could be a difficult situation to walk into. I imagine you have seen many changes in education throughout your years teaching?
- S: There have been a lot of changes, especially in the area of special education. When I started those students were sent off to special schools and you did not see them in the general population with regular students.
- DM: Yeah, things have changed drastically in special education. So going back to your mentor-mentee relationship, what characteristics do you feel are important for a mentor and why?
- S: I feel new teachers can feel very isolated and overwhelmed in many large schools systems. Training for new teachers is usually non-existent or mediocre. Umm, I have always felt other professions do a better job of mentoring and assisting new people in performing their job. They don't just throw someone into a job and hope for the best. In every other job I have had, I had someone working with me to help train me and teach me the ropes. I also had someone who discussed opportunities that existed in the job and what I needed to do to advance. I appreciate the people who have helped me with both support and constructive criticism.
- DM: Yeah, I came from a different profession into teaching and can see your point. So this year, what type of knowledge and experiences do you hope to gain from the relationship with your mentee this school year?
- S: I have been both a mentor and a mentee. I learned that it must be a two-way street. The mentor must be open to learn from the mentee. The key to success is the sharing of ideas and skills. Umm, I am really hoping to work with Kenny on infusing some more use of



technology into my classroom. From what I can tell so far, he seems to be really good with using his Smart Board and integrating web-based technologies into his lessons.

DM: How do you view your role in this mentee–mentor relationship?

S: I feel I need to be someone who is Open-minded, hard working, ability to adjust to change, respectful of the different abilities and skills of the mentee. If I can maintain these characteristics, I should be able to serve as a good resource for Kenny.

DM: With all of those characteristics in mind, how are you going to ensure you are a successful participant in this relationship?

S: I hope to assist any mentee in developing the attitude and skills needed to be successful in the field of education. If I can accomplish this, I know I have been a successful participant in the relationship.

DM: Switching gears to your mentee, in order to have a successful school year and relationship with your mentee, what expectations do you have for the new teacher you are assisting as it pertains to this professional relationship?

S: Well I expect the mentee to be open and comfortable with discussing any issue. If we do not have this level of trust and are not comfortable with one another, it is going to be hard to work together. Um, with respects to commitments, if we set meeting times, I hope that Kenny will keep those times and meet with me regularly. I also expect for him to be professional and respectful. I do not see that being an issues, Kenny is a fine young man.

DM: Well those definitely sound like reasonable expectations. One final question is in regards to this relationship and how you see it affecting your professional growth. In what ways do you hope to grow as a professional this year and how do you think the mentee–mentor relationship will effect that growth?

S: I hope to gain new ideas and techniques from someone who has had different experiences and training. Although I have continued to take classes in numerous subjects, my training was obviously decades ago. I learn daily from the younger teachers who have different ways of presenting material. It is very interesting to see how the curriculums are changing and developing. I am always hoping to improve my computer and technology skills.

DM: Well again Sydney, thank you for your time today. Before we end our Skype session, do you have any questions for me?

S: Yes, so we will do this two other times before the end of the year?

DM: Yes, we will have two other Skype sessions with just the two of us, on in January and one near the end of April, first week in May. I will also get together with you with the other mentors taking part in the study for two focus groups. Those are a group discussion and should last about an hour.

S: That sounds fine with me.

DM: Well thank you again for your time and I look forward to speaking with you again soon. I will send you a copy of the transcript to look at to make sure I have captured everything correctly.

S: Sure thing, have a good evening.

DM: You too Sydney, have a good night and a great rest of the week.

## Appendix J Sample Focus Group Transcript

Focus Group One: Mentees

Date: 01/29/2013

Start Time: 21:30 Central Europe Time

End Time: 22:13 Central Europe Time

Format: Google Group Chat, Video; Video and Audio Recorded

In Attendance: David Martin, Moderator; John; Katie; Kenny; Megan; Scott

Transcribed by: David Martin

*\*Please note that all of the participants' names have been changed on the transcripts to their pseudonyms.*

Key: DM=David Martin; J=002 John; KA=010 Katie; KE=006 Kenny; M=004 Megan; S=008Scott

By approximately 21:34, all participants had logged into the Google Chat session.

DM: Good evening, well good afternoon for you guys in the states. Before we get started, I would like each of you to begin by introducing yourself and tell us a little about your professional background. This will help assimilate you to the lag time associated with Google Chat.

S: Hi, my name is Scott and prior to becoming a teacher, I practiced corporate law.

KE: I am Kenny and I just finished a master's degree program receiving my certification in special education, prior to that, I worked at a university as a dorm manager.

Both John and Katie try to jump in. John defers to Katie.

KA: I am Katie and before becoming a teacher, I worked retail while completing my teaching degree.

J: Hi everyone, I am John and I was a retail manager before becoming a teacher.

M: Hello everyone, I am Megan and like Katie, I worked retail while in college working on earning my teaching degree.

DM: Thank you all for participating in this first of two focus group chats. Just to remind you, I am David Martin and I will be moderating this session. I appreciate your willingness to take part in this most important study. Before we get started, I just wanted to take a moment to set out a couple of ground rules. I want everyone to feel comfortable and feel like they can contribute openly. Let's all make sure we allow people to finish talking before we start our points, be respectful of one another, and remember, it's okay and encouraged to elaborate and if the comments take us into another area other than what the question asked, that is okay. The session should last approximately an hour. Is everyone ready to get started?

*General consensus of "yes" and some affirmative nods.*

- DM: Okay, let's start off with an easy question then. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
- J: Well I became a teacher because I was looking for something more rewarding and fulfilling than retail management. I worked so much but never really felt like I was making a difference.
- M: I have always been interested in literature and writing and that's why I decided to study it in school. I wanted to teach because it gave me the opportunity to combine my passion with the ability to inspire and facilitate young people in expressing themselves.
- S: Well the reason I decided to become a teacher started with the fact that I wanted a change from practicing law. I was passionate about law but not crazy about the practice of corporate litigation. When the opportunity came open at East End High School in which I would teach law courses, it was a great fit. This job gives me the opportunity to get kids excited about law.
- KE: I really love working with young people. I really wanted to make a difference with kids with special needs.
- KA: I had some great teachers when I was in high school. I remember that my government teacher was particularly great. She really started my interest in government and politics. I also was on the school newspaper staff for four years. The teacher was fantastic. She really got me excited about journalism. I think she is the primary reason why I studied journalism in college and wanted to teach and share my love of writing with students today.
- DM: Very good. So I am studying the mentor-mentee relationships each of you are engaged in. With half the year over now, how have these relationships played a part in your professional practice up until this point?
- S: I am getting certified through an alternative certification path. I am taking a couple of classes at the community college that are required for certification. Most of them are theory. Most of my growth as a teacher is occurring through my interaction with Grant and the assistance he is providing me. Aside from that, I have not been offered much else in the way of professional development.
- J: I agree with Scott, besides the few classes I am taking for certification purposes, my interaction with Vicki is my only regular means of professional development.
- KE: Right now, Sydney has been my primary means of professional development at this point.
- KA: I really feel that at this point, although my mentor has been helpful, we do not meet frequently enough. We do not share the same planning period, which creates an issue of finding the time to meet. The mentoring from Brad has really been the only opportunity provided by the school for professional development at this point aside from the week-long new teacher induction before school started. So because of that I would have to say it's a large part of my professional development but I would also have to say I am a bit disappointed in the development I have received from the relationship.
- M: My mentor Jennifer has been an incredible resource to have and she has been my primary source of professional development.
- DM: Okay, what elements do you think are important to have in a mentor/mentee relationship?

KE: Do you mean what characteristics does a mentor need to have or what traits need to be present in the relationship?

DM: I am looking to see what traits need to be present in the mentor/mentee relationship.

KE: Okay, I think first and foremost there needs to be a mutual sense of trust and respect. If that is present, then the two parties can engage in open communication with one another. If there is an open line of communication, then a teacher that has experience can share that experience with their mentee.

There was a general consensus to this answer and some affirmative nodding.

M: Open communication is an important part of my relationship with Jennifer. She is always sharing first hand experiences with me and I am able to talk about what is happening in my life.

J: I think trust, respect, and open communication are important but I am going to go further and say you must be honest and up front with one another. This honesty is the foundation for the other aspects of the relationship.

KA: All of that is important but the relationship also requires a time commitment and an investment in the relationship on the part of both parties.

S: I think what has helped Grant and I develop a solid relationship is that it is not all about business. We talk about other things aside from teaching. We both are avid runners and this shared interest has led to us running some races and training together. I know he has my back and will help me come along as a teacher because I know he is more than a mentor to me, he is a friend.

DM: That's some great insight. Tell me now a little about what types of activities you have been participating in with your mentor.

J: Vicki and I have been meeting at least once a week and she has been completing observations. She is always checking in on me to see how things are going, offer advice, and talk about strategies.

M: Jennifer meets with me at least once a week. She has also conducted regular observations. Since we share a planning period, it easy to get together and plan lessons with one another.

S: Grant and I do all the things previously mentioned. We also walk daily to the front office together and are able to chat about how our classes are going.

KE: Sydney and I have also done all of the things previously mentioned and plan lessons together. Aside from that, Sydney has really helped me out with drafting my IEPs. This is where I think I struggle the most; all of the documentation and paperwork involved with special education. She really knows the program and has helped me several times during meetings. She has reviewed IEPs and offered some really great suggestions.

KA: Brad and I have met a handful of times and he has sat in on a couple of classes, I just feel that we are not meeting enough. It has been hard to set a regular meeting schedule. I think I could really benefit from regular meetings and more feedback from observations.

J: Have you talked to Brad about this?

KA: No, I have not really talked to him about it.

J: I would have a conversation with him about your concerns and tell him how you feel. This is important and you need set up meetings with him and seek him out for help.

DM: Which activities do you find most beneficial?

K: I really like when Sydney reviewed and provided feedback on my IEPs.

M: I really enjoy planning with Jennifer. I get a lot of great ideas from her.

J: I really appreciate the reflection on the observations Vicki completes.

S: Grant and I have casual discussions on a daily basis. I really enjoy these.

Jennifer did not respond.

DM: Which activities do you find least effective?

J: I don't really know of any that are not effective.

General consensus from the group, affirmative nodding.

DM: How do you think the relationship has been progressing so far?

S: Grant and my relationship has been progressing wonderfully. I work well with Grant.

M: I am very happy with the way things have been going with Jennifer. We really collaborate with one another.

J: Yeah, I agree with Megan about the collaboration piece. If I have an issue in class that I need advice on, Vicki and I are able to really put our heads together and come up with a solution.

KE: I feel very comfortable with Sydney and am happy to have a relationship that is open and honest.

KA: Things have gotten off to a slow start with Brad and I. After listening to everyone, I am definitely going to make a bigger effort to meet on a regular basis. Hopefully this will promote collaboration between the two of us.

DM: That's great Katie. So the final question is what are some of your hopes for the relationship going forward and how are you going to ensure it's a positive experience?

S: I am going to continue to be open and honest with Grant and continue to be dedicated to the process of improving myself and making myself a better teacher.

KE: I totally agree with Scott. I will continue to be open and honest about my needs and working hard to improve.

M: I agree with both Scott and Kenny.

J: I really trust Vicki and know she is here to help me. She has a lot of experience that I have been able to tap into. I want to make sure I am honest about how I want my career to progress. I want to make sure I express my hesitations as a professional. If I can do this, I think she can really identify where I need the most support.

KA: After listening to what everyone has talked about and seeing the support that they have gotten through their mentoring relationships, I am really going to reach out to Brad and see

if we can't start meeting more. I do believe he has a lot of offer and I think if we can meet more, we will find collaborating with each other will help us both grow as professionals.

DM: Well thank you all for participating in this focus group. Any further comments? (pause) We will have another one of these near the end of the school year and I will be talking to each of you during your individual interviews. Don't forget to keep getting your journal entries in. Have a great night.

## Appendix K Sample Electronic Journal Entry

Sample Journal Entry taken from participant Vicki, \*\*\*\*\*\_journalentry\_11022012.docx

Week of October 29, 2012

Monday-Did not meet with John

Tuesday-Did not meet with John

Wednesday

I went into John's class during 3<sup>rd</sup> period today. He was working with students in small groups. John is always so patient with students, he really has a knack for making kids feel at ease but at the same time he is very structured. He definitely likes things in their places and confesses to me all the time he is a bit OCD. I think I am going to move some things around in his room one day when he is at lunch and see how he reacts (little joke there). He really groups students well, always working with the ones that need the most help. Tomorrow when we meet, I want to ask him about the flash cards he was using at each table, the kids seemed to really enjoy them.

Thursday

I met with John after school today. It was hard for me to meet simply because I was so tired. I really wish that John and I had the same planning period. It is hard, especially when everything gets so busy around the end of the quarter, to find time to meet. If we just had one common planning period that would make it a lot easier. I am also sometimes struggling with content-related questions. John teaches remedial reading and I teach remedial math. Sometimes I have to steer him to some of his other colleagues for assistance with content-related questions.

Friday

Did not meet with John today but I did invite him to Chilis after school with a group that was going for a drink.



## **Appendix L Sample Researcher Theoretical Memo**

Theoretical Memo from 2<sup>nd</sup> Interviews, Brad and Katie

January 29, 2013

### **Sustained Engagement**

For an activity to be seen as an effective form of professional development, the research states that it must have some form of sustained engagement. An activity must be planned in a way in which there is time for participants to have continued interaction with the subject matter. Mentoring provides this sustained engagement opportunity through regular meetings between participants and within these meetings, a continuous dialogue centered on the needs of the parties involved.

Brad and Katie seem to be struggling in maintaining any form of sustained engagement within their mentor-mentee relationship. The main hurdle that is preventing this sustained engagement is due to the fact that neither have committed to the process involved with the mentor-mentee relationship. Both report that it is difficult to find the time to meet and that the locations of their classrooms make it difficult to facilitate the relationship.

Brad is new to the mentoring role. Katie is the first new teacher he has mentored. It is clear through the first two interviews that he was unaware of the time commitment mentoring a new teacher would require. Both he and Katie have also complained that they do not share a common planning. According to them, this also makes it more difficult to meet. Both keep going back to the lack of time as an issue keeping the relationship from moving forward. This really seems to hinder their ability to collaborate. Katie seems to be lacking the critical support she needs at times (although she did comment on Brad's help with a set of difficult parents) and at the same time, Brad is not seeing any residual benefit from serving in his role as a mentor.

The lack of sustained engagement is affecting the ability for the relationship (at this point) to move forward into a truly collaborative one in which both parties are learning from each other. Due to the lack of time to meet, the relationship is not moving forward and providing little support to either party.

### Appendix M Sample Open Coding

Coding for activities or behaviors seen as important for a mentor-mentee relationship (Mechanical or Emotional). Activity or behavior in bold and italics.

Excerpt from the first focus group with mentees. The coding is done in the body of the text.

DM: Okay, what elements do you think are important to have in a mentor/mentee relationship?

KE: Do you mean what characteristics does a mentor need to have or what traits need to be present in the relationship?

DM: I am looking to see what traits need to be present in the mentor/mentee relationship.

KE: Okay, I think first and foremost there needs to be a mutual sense of ***trust and respect*** (**Emotional Aspect**). If that is present, then the two parties can engage in (**Emotional/Mechanical Aspect**) ***open communication*** with one another. If there is an open line of communication, then a teacher that has experience can share that experience with their mentee.

There was a general consensus to this answer and some affirmative nodding.

M: (**Emotional/Mechanical Aspect**) ***Open communication*** is an important part of my relationship with Jennifer. She is always sharing first hand experiences with me and I am able to talk about what is happening in my life.

J: I think (**Emotional/Mechanical Aspect**) ***trust, respect, and open communication*** are important but I am going to go further and say you must be (**Emotional Aspect**) ***honest and up front*** with one another. This honesty is the foundation for the other aspects of the relationship.

KA: All of that is important but the relationship also requires a (**Mechanical Aspect**) ***time commitment*** and an investment in the relationship on the part of both parties.

S: I think what has helped Grant and I develop a solid relationship is that it is not all about business. We talk about other things aside from teaching. We both are avid runners and this shared interest has led to us running some races and training together. I know he has my back and will help me come along as a teacher because I know he is more than a mentor to me, he is a (**Emotional Aspect**) ***friend***.

DM: That's some great insight. Tell me now a little about what types of activities you have been participating in with your mentor.

#### All Mechanical Aspects presented in this response

J: Vicki and I have been meeting at least once a week and she has been completing ***observations***. She is always checking in on me to ***see how things are going, offer advice, and talk about strategies***.

- M: Jennifer meets with me at least once a week. She has also conducted **regular observations**. Since we share a planning period, it easy to get together and **plan lessons** with one another.
- S: Grant and I do all the things previously mentioned. We also walk daily to the front office together and are able to chat about how our classes are going.
- KE: Sydney and I have also done all of the things previously mentioned and plan lessons together. Aside from that, Sydney has really helped me out with **drafting my IEPs**. This is where I think I struggle the most; all of the documentation and paperwork involved with special education. She really knows the program and has helped me several times during meetings. She has **reviewed IEPs** and offered some really great suggestions.
- KA: ***Brad and I have met a handful of times and he has sat in on a couple of classes, I just feel that we are not meeting enough. It has been hard to set a regular meeting schedule. I think I could really benefit from regular meetings and more feedback from observations.***

***Katie provided a negative response above.***

### Appendix N Example of Axial Coding

This is an example of axial coding from the second set of interviews, specifically dealing with components of the mentoring relationship, both mechanical and emotional.

X=Reported Activity or Behavior

<b>Mechanical</b>	<b>Vicki</b>	<b>John</b>	<b>Jennifer</b>	<b>Megan</b>	<b>Sydney</b>	<b>Kenny</b>	<b>Grant</b>	<b>Scott</b>	<b>Brad</b>	<b>Katie</b>
Regular Meetings	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Observations	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Planning	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Co-Teaching					x	x	x	x		
Model Lessons			x	x						
Open Comm	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Time	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Reviewed IEPs				x	x					
<b>Emotional</b>	<b>Vicki</b>	<b>John</b>	<b>Jennifer</b>	<b>Megan</b>	<b>Sydney</b>	<b>Kenny</b>	<b>Grant</b>	<b>Scott</b>	<b>Brad</b>	<b>Katie</b>
Trust	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Respect	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Open Comm	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Honesty		x								
Friendship			x	x			x	x		

## Appendix O Initial Interview Questions

### *Initial Interview Questions: Mentor*

9. What previous professional experience do you have prior to becoming a teacher?
10. Have you ever had a formal relationship with a mentor before, and if so, please explain the context of those relationships.
11. What characteristics do you feel are important for a mentor and why?
12. What type of knowledge and/or experience do you hope to gain from your mentee this school year?
13. How do you view your role in this mentee–mentor relationship?
14. How are you going to ensure you are a successful participant in this relationship?
15. In order to have a successful school year and relationship with your mentee, what expectations do you have for the new teacher you are assisting as it pertains to this professional relationship?
16. In what ways do you hope to grow as a professional this year and how do you think the mentee–mentor relationship will effect that growth?

### *Initial Interview Questions: Mentee*

9. What previous professional experience do you have prior to becoming a teacher?
10. Have you ever had a formal relationship with a mentor before, and if so, please explain the context of those relationships.
11. What characteristics do you feel are important for a mentor and why?
12. What type of knowledge and/or experience do you hope to gain from your mentor this school year?
13. How do you view your role in this mentee–mentor relationship?
14. How are you going to ensure you are a successful participant in this relationship?
15. What types of structure does the mentor need to provide to be a successful part of this relationship?
16. How do you plan on communicating your professional and emotional needs to your mentor?

## Appendix P Second Interview Questions

### *Second Interview Questions: Mentor*

8. What types of activities have you been doing with your mentee?
9. What activities do you find most beneficial for the mentee and why? Least beneficial and why?
10. What kinds of things have you learned from this experience thus far that have helped you in your own professional practice?
11. How would you characterize your relationship with your mentee (one sided or collaborative)? If one sided, why do you feel the relationship has remained this way? If collaborative, please briefly describe how this collaboration developed.
12. What has been the most difficult aspect of your relationship with your mentee and why?
13. What are some of your hopes for this relationship throughout the remainder of the year?
14. What are some of the “light bulb” moments you have seen with your mentee? What are some of the “light bulb” moments you have had yourself during this process?

### *Second Interview Questions: Mentee*

8. What types of activities have you been doing with your mentor?
9. What activities do you find most beneficial for the mentor and why? Least beneficial and why?
10. What kinds of things have you learned from this experience thus far that have helped you in your own professional practice in the classroom/school setting?
11. How would you characterize your relationship with your mentor (one sided or collaborative)? If one sided, why do you feel the relationship has remained this way? If collaborative, please briefly describe how this collaboration developed.
12. What has been the most difficult aspect of your relationship with your mentor and why?
13. Describe some experiences with your mentor that you recognize as important toward your development as an educator.
14. What are some of your hopes for this relationship throughout the remainder of the year?

## Appendix Q Final Interview Questions

### *Final Interview Questions: Mentor*

8. What has been the most rewarding part of the relationship with your mentee and why?
9. What has been the most difficult part of the relationship with your mentee and why?
10. In your opinion, what are the key factors to ensuring a mentee–mentor relationship is successful and why?
11. In the future, if you choose to mentor another new teacher, what will you make sure to do the same and what will you do differently?
12. How can school administrators best support mentee–mentor relationships to ensure they are successful?
13. What would you say were the most important things you learned during this process?
14. What are your hopes for your mentee and how do you see yourself using the experiences gained through the process of mentoring?

### *Final Interview Questions: Mentee*

1. What has been the most rewarding part of the relationship with your mentee and why?
2. What has been the most difficult part of the relationship with your mentee and why?
3. In your opinion, what are the key factors to ensuring a mentee–mentor relationship is successful and why?
4. In the future, if you choose to mentor a new teacher, from your experiences as a mentee, how will you approach the relationship?
5. How can school administrators best support mentee–mentor relationships to ensure they are successful?
6. What would you say were the most important things you learned during this process?
7. How do you think this experience will shape the way in which you approach teaching? Do you believe all people wanting to become teachers need mentors? Why or why not?