IMPACT OF MENTORING ON K-12 BEGINNING TEACHERS’
EFFICACY AND COMMITMENT: A COMPARATIVE
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Sandra Kay Mozdzanowski
Liberty University

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

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ABSTRACT

Despite a growing body of literature on the needs of beginning teachers, little is known about the impact of mentoring on K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to teaching, and why beginning teachers in special education received less mentoring than their counterparts in general education. This qualitative phenomenological study compared the experiences of nine beginning teachers in general education and special education, factors within the school (e.g., principal, mentor coordinator, mentor), and characteristics of the teaching assignment. The central question was: What are the experiences of K-12 beginning teachers who receive mentoring? The sample consisted of 22 participants (9 teachers, 8 mentors, 4 principals, and a mentor coordinator). Data were collected from interviews, observations, a focus group, and site documents. Three themes emerged through the use of thematic analysis proposed by Moustakas (1994). The themes were: (a) beginning teachers require molding and shaping to impact school culture; (b) beginning teachers imitate to replicate school culture; and (c) a mindset of support impacts school culture. The central question and 6 sub-questions were answered thematically from the participants’ perspectives. Textural and structural descriptions were integrated, which resulted in the essence of participants’ experiences: The flow effect: A culture of reciprocity.

Keywords: Mentoring, beginning teacher, efficacy beliefs, reciprocity, special education
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends. My husband and children waited patiently for me to achieve my goal. Their encouragement and support were more than I could have imagined. During the journey, I realized I was not overworked but under challenged.

To my mother and father who said, “You can achieve anything you want. The sky is the limit. You determine what you want to achieve.” Their words of affirmation motivated me throughout the journey.

To my sisters and brother, your words of encouragement, counsel, and prayers kept me focused on crossing the finish line. Special thanks to Rebecca, my sister, and David M., our nephew, your help was provided at just the right time.

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# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................. 3  
Dedication ................................................................................................................................. 4  
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. 5  
List of Tables ............................................................................................................................ 11  
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................... 12  

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 13  
Overview ................................................................................................................................. 13  
Background ............................................................................................................................... 13  
Situation to Self .......................................................................................................................... 15  
Problem Statement ................................................................................................................... 16  
Purpose Statement .................................................................................................................... 17  
Significance of the Study ......................................................................................................... 17  
Research Questions ................................................................................................................. 18  
Research Plan ........................................................................................................................... 19  
Delimitations and Limitations .................................................................................................. 21  
Definitions ............................................................................................................................... 22  
Summary ................................................................................................................................. 23  

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................... 24  
Overview ................................................................................................................................. 24  
Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................................ 25  
Stages of Mentoring ................................................................................................................. 26  
Constructivism ......................................................................................................................... 28
Social Learning Theory ................................................................. 29
Efficacy Theory ........................................................................ 30
Affective Event Theory ............................................................... 31
Related Literature ..................................................................... 32
Policies Influencing Induction ...................................................... 33
Pre-service Training and Mentoring ........................................... 38
Challenges of Beginning Teachers .............................................. 42
Role of Principal ...................................................................... 44
Role and Characteristics of a Mentor ........................................... 47
Role of Mentor Coordinator ...................................................... 49
Role of Colleagues ..................................................................... 52
Strategies Impacting Efficacy and Commitment ....................... 53
Summary ................................................................................... 62

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS .......................................................... 64
Design ....................................................................................... 64
Research Questions ................................................................... 66
Setting ....................................................................................... 66
Participants ............................................................................... 66
Procedures ............................................................................... 67
The Researcher's Role ............................................................... 69
Data Collection ......................................................................... 70
Interviews ................................................................................ 70
Observations ............................................................................ 72
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview .................................................................................................................. 82

Participants .............................................................................................................. 83

Beginning Teachers ............................................................................................... 84
Mentors .................................................................................................................... 89
Principals .................................................................................................................. 94
Mentor Coordinator ................................................................................................. 96

Results ..................................................................................................................... 97

Themes ..................................................................................................................... 98

Beginning Teachers Require Molding and Shaping to Impact the School Culture ................................................................. 99
Beginning Teachers Imitate to Replicate the School Culture ................................. 107
A Mindset of Support Permeates the School Culture .............................................. 116

Research Questions ............................................................................................... 122
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>CONSENT FORM FOR MENTORS</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MENTORS</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MENTOR COORDINATOR</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>OBSERVATION PROTOCOL</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>CODED HORIZONS</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>EXTERNAL AUDIT OF CHAPTER FOUR</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>MEMBER CHECK EMAIL</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1 *Horizons of Emerging Themes – Beginning Teachers* ................................................................. 99
List of Figures

*Figure 1.* The Flow Effect: A Culture of Reciprocity ................................................................. 134
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The field of education has been influenced by research, yet K-12 schools continue to experience a high rate of turnover among beginning teachers. Many beginning teachers leave the profession early in their career, which results in widespread shortages of qualified teachers. As a result, nearly 18 million new teachers will be needed in the near future (O’Connor, Malow, & Bisland, 2011). Specifically, the United States will need 1.7 million teachers in less than a decade (O’Connor et al., 2011). In urban areas and under-performing schools, turnover is a far more serious problem (O’Connor et al., 2011). Research suggests that 30% of beginning teachers leave within the first three years and 50% within the first five years (O’Connor et al., 2011). These statistics suggest that some school administrators fail to understand the diverse needs of beginning teachers and how mentoring may meet their needs and reduce turnover.

Although mentoring supports beginning teachers, not all beginning teachers have mentors (Washburn-Moses, 2010). Furthermore, some beginning teachers are dissatisfied with the mentoring support they receive (Dempsey & Carty, 2009), and others are dissatisfied with lack of support from the principal and are troubled by student misbehavior and school bureaucracy (O’Connor et al., 2011). Additional research is needed to investigate why these issues plague beginning teachers.

Background

Every child has the right to full and fair access to education taught by qualified teachers. During the last four decades, landmark legislation has dramatically changed the field of education. Legislation has influenced how general and special education teachers deliver instruction and how they interact with each other, students, and parents.
Prior to 1970, schools were permitted to deny enrollment to children with disabilities (Anderson, 2012). To ensure that all children have access to a public education, the federal government passed three pieces of landmark legislation. In 1975, Public Law 94-142 mandated that “every child had a right to free and appropriate public education” (West & Hudson, 2010, p. 64). Furthermore, the law stated that children are entitled to a public education in the least restrictive environment (Anderson, 2012; Byrnes, 2009). The least restrictive environment allows students with disabilities to be included in general education classrooms.

Inclusion in schools is based on the philosophy that local schools should provide for the educational needs of all children in their community, whatever their cultural or socio-economic background, ability, or disability; including those who may have intellectual, physical, sensory, or behavioral challenges. (Arthur-Kelly, Sutherland, Lyons, Macfarlane, & Foreman, 2013, p. 218)

As a result, inclusive education grants social justice to all students (Puig & Recchia, 2012).

In 1990, Americans with Disabilities Act extended protection and forbade discrimination against any individual with a disability that substantially limits a major life activity (Byrnes, 2009). Then, the federal government passed No Child Left Behind in 2001, which was intended to reform K-12 schools throughout the United States. As a result, school administrators were asked to report on students’ average yearly progress (i.e., standardized test scores, attendance, graduation rates) (Byrnes, 2009). Lastly, the federal government passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act in 2004, which mandated that beginning teachers meet federal and state requirements of being highly qualified, delivering quality services, improving academic results, and increasing the self-sufficiency of students with disabilities (Byrnes, 2009). Overall, these laws added greater complexity to the field of education.
Due to the complexity of these laws, the field of special education is plagued with issues. First, beginning teachers’ ethnicity is not aligned with students’ ethnicity (West & Hudson, 2010). Second, beginning teachers are overwhelmed with the amount of paperwork and time required to complete Individualized Education Plans (Anderson, 2012). Third, teacher shortages hover around 10% each year, which has a detrimental impact on morale (Sindelar, Brownell & Billingsley, 2010). As a result, beginning special education teachers are 2.5 times more likely to leave their career than their counterparts in general education (Jones, Youngs, & Frank, 2013; Voltz & Collins, 2010).

Situation to Self

The researcher selected this topic because she mentored beginning teachers at church. She trained mentees and spent eight weeks in each mentee’s classroom observing and providing them with written feedback. Over the past ten years, the church experienced a high turnover of adult volunteer teachers. The researcher explored the literature to understand factors of satisfaction and practical methods to reduce the turnover rate of volunteers who taught adult Christian education classes. After graduation, the researcher intends to apply what she learned and start a second career in higher education.

Throughout the study, the researcher assumed an axiological perspective. The researcher interpreted participants’ experiences based on her values. Reality was viewed through a constructivist lens. A constructivist epistemology required the researcher to observe, reflect, and synthesize participants’ experiences based on her previous mentoring experiences to create a new reality--the essence of what it meant to be beginning teachers who received mentoring, and its impact on their efficacy and commitment to their career and school.
Problem Statement

Research suggests that efficacy beliefs (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009) and school climate predict turnover among beginning teachers (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). Low efficacy hinders commitment (Gebbie, Ceglowski, Taylor, & Miels, 2012) due to lack of experience and opportunity to collaborate with peers (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). In the field of special education, physical and emotional isolation tends to devastate beginning teachers’ commitment (Tuomainen, Palonen, & Hakkarainen, 2012).

In a 2001 survey of 6,733 beginning teachers, Ingersoll (2001) found that inadequate support by school administration, student behavior problems, and lack of preparation time were leading reasons of dissatisfaction (Ingersoll, 2001). Two years later, Kardos (2003) studied 486 beginning teachers in California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Michigan and found that over half of the participants received no mentoring support or assistance from school administrators (Kardos, 2003). Jones and Youngs (2012) agreed with previous research and concluded that not all school administrators understand the importance of providing support to beginning teachers, which may lead to turnover.

Research suggests that 14% of beginning teachers leave the field of education in the first year and as many as 50% leave within the first five years (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). In the field of special education, beginning teachers are twice as likely to leave the field of education as their counterparts in general education (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Consequently, “schools in the United States lose approximately $2.6 billion per year due to teacher turnover with an estimated cost of $12,000 to replace a teacher” (Andrews, Gilbert, & Martin, 2007, p. 4). In 2014, the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) reported that turnover of beginning teachers in Massachusetts costs between $24.2 to $52.6 million dollars per year. In short, the problem is
little is known about efficacy and commitment of K-12 beginning general education teachers (GETs) as compared with that of beginning special education teachers (SETs) (Jones et al., 2013) and why these SETs receive less mentoring than their GET counterparts (Washburn-Moses, 2010).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to compare the experiences of GETs with SETs in a school district in the north eastern section of the United States and examine the impact of mentoring on K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their school and career. The selected district had eight schools, 311 teachers, and a mentoring program, which existed for more than a decade (MTA Webmaster, 2013). To date, mentors have supported 86 beginning teachers and only one beginning teacher left the district since the program’s inception (MTA Webmaster, 2013). This study examined factors within a particular school district (e.g., principal, mentor, and mentor coordinator and characteristics of the teaching assignment) that impacted beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment. As teachers are mentored, they will likely experience higher efficacy and commitment to their school and career.

**Significance of the Study**

This phenomenological study was multidimensional and had implications for individuals throughout the learning community. First, beginning GETs and SETs had an opportunity to describe their experiences, which may increase their efficacy and commitment as they “examine their beliefs, assumptions, and values to reconstruct knowledge and begin a process of personal and social change in perspective” (Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012, p. 171). Second, with increased awareness school administrators may choose to differentiate support of beginning teachers (Washburn-Moses, 2010). Third, the school district may gain a better understanding of
the overall impact of the district’s mentoring program on beginning teachers (Washburn-Moses, 2010). Fourth, students may report an increase in academic achievement due to higher retention of beginning teachers (Shernoff, Marinez-Lora, Frazier, Jakobsons, & Atkins, 2011). Lastly, the research community will gain a better understanding of the experiences of beginning teachers within the context of a school district’s mentoring program.

**Research Questions**

The primary question is: What are the experiences of K-12 beginning teachers who receive mentoring? Despite the fact that much is already known about beginning teachers, a gap exists in the literature in making a direct comparison of the experiences of GETs with SETs, of how mentoring impacts their efficacy and commitment (Jones et al., 2013), and of why beginning SETs receive less mentoring than their GET counterparts (Washburn-Moses, 2010).

To address the gap in the literature, the following questions guided this research study: First, what are the challenges of K-12 beginning teachers and what strategies are used to overcome challenges? Beginning teachers are concerned with lack of preparation time, diverse needs of students, time constraints, immense workload, and lack of support from peers and administrators (Billingsley, Griffin, Smith, Kamman, & Israel, 2009; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Second, what are the perceptions of beginning GETs about SETs and vice versa? To effectively support an integrated classroom, teachers require time to collaborate, set goals, differentiate instruction, and improve classroom management (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). Understanding perceptions may prevent misunderstandings and increase collaboration. Third, what obstacles prevent effective mentoring of beginning teachers? Due to budget constraints and lack of legislative requirements, some school districts do not provide mentoring support to beginning teachers (Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008).
The fourth question examines how mentors support beginning teachers? Wang et al. (2008) found that mentoring was effective when beginning teachers chose to implement content-specific pedagogy suggested by an experienced mentor teacher. The theoretical framework of this study explores the four stages of mentoring proposed by Kram (1983). Thus, this research question allowed the researcher to see which of these stages were included and which stages were perhaps neglected. The fifth question dealt with how school administrators support beginning teachers? Fantilli and McDougall (2009) found that administrators supported beginning teachers by providing mentoring services, differentiating support, and creating a lead teacher role. Principals provided support to beginning teachers by ensuring that there is an inclusive, positive learning environment in which teachers have sufficient time to learn from each other and instruct students (Leko & Smith, 2010). Sixth, how does a district mentoring program and coordinator support beginning teachers? Dempsey and Carty (2009) argued that a quality mentoring program ensures that mentors receive training, provide emotional support, reduce isolation from peers and the curriculum, and motivate beginning GETs and SETs to implement well-planned instruction. Overall, these research questions are aligned with Creswell’s (2013) notion that “research questions should be open-ended, evolving, non-directional… few in number (five to seven)” and provide the basis for a review of the literature and subsequent research (p. 138).

**Research Plan**

This qualitative study used a comparative phenomenological design because a phenomenon existed between two groups, beginning GETs and SETs. To understand the phenomenon, the researcher compared the experiences of K-12 beginning GETs and SETs and the impact of mentoring on their efficacy and commitment to their school and career. Creswell
(2013) argued that “a phenomenological study describes the common meaning of several individuals’ lived experiences of a phenomenon” (p. 76). The full essence of what it means to be a beginning teacher may be difficult to understand using a quantitative method of inquiry. Therefore, a comparative phenomenological design was appropriate for this study.

After Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board granted permission, the school district provided written approval, the participants provided written consent, data were gathered from a sample of nine beginning teachers (i.e., five in general education and four in special education), as well as four principals, eight mentors, and mentor coordinator. Beginning teachers were selected based on answers to a criterion survey as presented in Appendix A. Creswell (2013) suggested the use of “criterion sampling” ensured that all participants meet the same conditions and enhanced the overall quality of the study (p. 158).

The data collection strategy consisted of private interviews, a focus group interview, and observations of teachers’ classrooms and mentoring sessions. Then, site documents were examined to understand the district’s mentoring strategy. Collecting data from these diverse situations allowed the researcher to gain a true sense of where the participants were in relationship to the stages of mentoring, which was described in the theoretical framework of this study. To enhance credibility, Creswell (2013) suggested that a phenomenological study should include data from multiple sources.

Data were analyzed using seven steps proposed by Moustakas (1994). The steps were as follows: (a) listing and grouping data, (b) reducing and eliminating redundant data, (c) clustering and thematizing, (d) identifying themes, (e) constructing a textural description, (f) constructing a structural description, and finally (g) constructing an overall textural-structural description of the meaning of the experience (p. 122). Creswell (2013) suggested that a researcher suspend
judgment to arrive at a new meaning of the phenomenon.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

The participants in this study were selected from a school district in the north eastern part of the United States. This school district was comprised of eight schools and approximately 300 teachers (MTA Webmaster, 2013). This particular school district was selected for various reasons. First, the school district had a mentoring program, which was in existence for more than 10 years. Second, the researcher had rapport with district and local leaders because her children attended school in the district. Third, the school district had at least 10 beginning teachers who were mentored or had been mentored during the last five years. Fourth, a sample size of 10 beginning teachers was selected because there was one researcher collecting and analyzing data. A sample size of between 5 and 25 was recommended for a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013).

Regarding limitations, participants were from one school district in the north eastern part of the United States, which affected generalization of the study’s findings. Despite this limitation, trustworthiness was accomplished by the researcher’s use an external auditor, triangulating data, checking with participants for verification of transcripts, and maintaining a research journal. Credibility was achieved by prolonged interaction with participants, persistent observation, triangulation of data, and member checking of transcripts. Transferability was realized by ensuring participants provided a detailed description of what it meant to be a beginning GET or SET. Dependability was accomplished by keeping an audit trail in a research journal that described daily experiences, auditing of transcripts by participants, and verifying findings by an independent third party. Lastly, confirmability was possible by providing direct quotes from participants and member checking. Most importantly, the researcher followed a
detailed research plan to achieve trustworthiness and diminish limitations. Overall, the aforementioned factors enhanced the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study.

**Definitions**

Various terms found in this study were listed and defined below. Definitions enable the reader to understand how the terms relate to the topic of mentoring and how they were used in this study. Lastly, the term was supported with related literature.

1. *Beginning teacher* – an educator with five or fewer years of teaching experience (Dempsey & Carty, 2009)


3. *Mentoring process* - support of a less experienced practitioner by a more experienced practitioner (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009), conceptualized practice shaped by culture, curriculum, and teaching (Wang et al., 2008), knowledge transfer from a more-experienced to a less-experienced individual (Ojewunmi, 2011), “transmission of knowledge, social capital and psychosocial support” (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007, p. 731), interaction, phone follow-up, online forums, or in-class modeling (Dempsey & Christenson-Foggett, 2011), “situated cognition, scaffolding, cognitive apprenticeship, and reflection” (Moss, 2010, p.44), or “one-to-one support of a novice or less experienced practitioner by a more experienced” (Hobson et al., 2009, p. 207)

4. *Mentor* – veteran teacher supporting a beginning teacher with pedagogical knowledge within a specific school’s culture (Capizzi, Wehby, & Sandmel, 2010), a meaningful
relationship based on trust that enables a veteran teacher and novice teacher to learn from each other (Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks, & Lai, 2009)

5. **Mentoring relationship** – informal and voluntary relationship of dyads (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007)

6. **Efficacy** - beliefs about self that impact one’s thinking, feelings, motivation, and actions (Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 1993)

7. **School climate** - the working conditions and support from peers and school administrators within a learning community’s social, cultural, and organizational context (Jones et al., 2013; Lai, 2010)

**Summary**

Although mentoring supports some beginning teachers, not all beginning GETs and SETs have benefited. Lack of support from peers and administrators tends to negatively impact beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment. Shortages of qualified beginning teachers remain a serious problem in schools throughout the United States. To gain an understanding of this problem, research based on private interviews, observations, a focus group interview, and site documents provided an in depth understanding of the experiences of K-12 beginning and how mentoring impacted their efficacy and commitment to their school and career.

This chapter provided the background, established the research problem, the purpose and significance of the study, the research questions and definitions of specific terms, as well as the research plan, delimitations and limitations of the study. In Chapter Two, the literature will be reviewed. Chapter Three will describe the methodology for the study. Chapter Four will document the results. Lastly, Chapter Five will discuss the study from the researcher’s perspective and present suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The field of education has been influenced by a growing body of research on the topic of mentoring, yet remains plagued with systemic issues of retention and quality of beginning teachers. Novice teachers struggle with transferring pre-service knowledge to the workplace, feeling inadequately trained, needing somebody to answer their questions, and requiring emotional support and direction for their career (Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012). All of these issues are drivers of low efficacy and high turnover of K-12 beginning teachers.

There is broad agreement in the literature regarding turnover of beginning teachers (Barrera, Braley & Slate, 2010; Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009; Billingsley, Griffin, Smith, Kamman, & Israel, 2009; Washburn-Moses, 2010). In the United States, approximately one in every two beginning teachers, or approximately 50%, leaves the profession within the first five years (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). Annually, approximately 227,016 public school teachers change schools for better working conditions while as many as 230,122 may leave the profession and enter another career field (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). The cumulative cost of replacing qualified teachers may be as high as $2.2 billion per year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). Attrition is 18% in school districts which lack a mentoring program, whereas it is 5% in those districts with a formal mentoring program (Barrera et al., 2010). As a result, teacher support strategies have been the primary focus of schools to retain and develop beginning teachers.

A school district’s policies and practices influence whether pre-service teachers will assimilate successfully into the workplace. To enable novice teachers to transfer what they have learned to the workplace, some schools mentor beginning teachers, which requires an investment
of time, money, and trained personnel. Due to fiscal constraints and lack of trained personnel, some beginning teachers receive no mentoring support, become discouraged, and leave the profession (Andrews, Gilbert, & Martin, 2007).

Despite a growing body of literature in support of beginning teachers, there is a lack of literature comparing the experiences of beginning general education teachers (GETs) with those of teachers in special education (SETs). Furthermore, there is lack of literature that provides a clear understanding of why beginning SETs receive less mentoring support than their counterparts in general education (Washburn-Moses, 2010). To systematically explore this gap in the literature, the researcher analyzed the theoretical framework and examined key themes throughout the literature. Thus, the researcher analyzed the mentoring literature by searching various databases such as ERIC, EBSCO, and Academic Search using the key words pre-service, or student, or novice, or beginning teacher; general education, special education, and mentor. The criteria returned 1,057 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2008 and 2014. The researcher then narrowed the search to articles on mentoring of K-12 beginning teachers, of which at least 100 high quality articles were reviewed. Several articles from other databases, including a dissertation database, were reviewed because of their appropriateness to the topic and support of the problem statement and research.

**Theoretical Framework**

The literature contained various theories applicable to mentoring but lacked consensus on one theoretical framework (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007; Lai, 2010). Consequently, researchers of this topic pointed to various theories from the fields of psychology and education such as the four phases of mentoring (Kram, 1983), constructivism (Kolb, 1984), social learning theory (Kolb, 1984), efficacy theory (Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 1993), and affective event theory (Weiss
& Cropanzano, 1996). Taken together, the aforementioned theories provided a theoretical foundation for mentoring and supported the study’s research questions.

**Stages of Mentoring**

Kram (1983) was one of the first researchers to investigate the positive aspects of mentoring and found that mentoring was based on an individual’s need for psychosocial support, guidance to accomplish tasks, and advancement of one’s career. In her seminal study, Kram found that a mentor-mentee relationship went through four stages. During the first stage, initiation (six to twelve months), novices evaluate their competencies and form relationships with mentors. Over time, an emotional bond occurs as a byproduct of frequent interaction.

During the second stage, cultivation (two to five years), the mentor-mentee relationship peaks. Novices have gained practical experience and assessed accomplishments. At this point, mentors have modeled behavior, which has begun to have an impact on mentees’ behavior. Modeling is defined as “learning through imitation… the teacher acts and models a preferred way of teaching… in actual situations” (Bashan & Holsblat, 2012, p. 207). In the field of education, modeling is an important aspect of mentoring because mentees reconceptualize their practice, which results in a transfer of knowledge to students and better teaching performance (Bashan & Holsblat, 2012).

During the third stage, separation (after five years), the mentor-mentee relationship is redefined. Mentees experience autonomy and act independently. At this juncture, mentors feel a sense of accomplishment and pride due to investing a significant amount of time and energy to prepare mentees to independently face life’s challenges. Regrettably, unprepared mentees may experience a drop in performance during this stage and may require additional support.

During the last stage, redefinition (more than five years), mentors and mentees interact on
an informal basis and may continue their friendship. Mentors and mentees tend to benefit from the relationship. Mentors’ careers are reenergized and mentees’ confidence and competence increase with each passing day (Kram, 1983). In short, beginning teachers who receive mentoring in conjunction with district induction make greater gains in teaching effectiveness than beginning teachers supported solely by a district induction program (Stanulis & Floden, 2009).

As mentees observe their mentors and implement relevant suggestions, transformation is possible. Just as a butterfly struggles to grow and develop, so beginning teachers do likewise as they develop new knowledge and skills. Transformational learning is defined as “a process during which adult learners [beginning teachers] critically examine their beliefs, assumptions, and values in light of acquired new knowledge and begin a process of personal and social change to reframe their perspective” (Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012, p. 171). As new methods of teaching are explored and implemented, higher levels of teachers’ efficacy and confidence are possible.

In a qualitative study, Kumi-Yeboah and James (2012) found that “teachers move through four stages of transformation: Fear and Uncertainty, Testing and Exploring, Affirming and Connecting, which culminates in New Perspectives” (p. 176). Kumi-Yeboah and James detailed the specific actions embedded in Kram’s (1983) four phases of mentoring. In the mentoring process, teachers gain a new understanding and reorganize their thinking as they reflect on practice. After reflection, they are more effective at meeting students’ learning needs, develop a positive relationship with mentors, and seek out professional development opportunities to keep their knowledge and skills up-to-date.

Mentoring and reflecting require time, energy, and commitment. Behavior does not
change quickly. Mentoring and reflecting are complicated and contain the following psychosocial dimensions: (a) relational, (b) developmental, and (c) contextual (Lai, 2010). The first dimension, the relational, is based on the interaction of mentors and mentees. It takes time for mentors and mentees to develop trust and learn from each other. The second dimension, the developmental, focuses on the professional development of novice teachers. As beginning GETs and SETs evaluate their knowledge and skills and develop an improvement plan, growth is possible. The third dimension, the contextual, relates to a school’s organizational and cultural influences on teachers (Lai, 2010). A school’s organization is unique due to the specific mix of individuals, their backgrounds, and culture. Furthermore, district and local administrators influence beginning GETs or SETs perception of their career and work environment. In view of the amount of time, energy, and commitment required to change behavior, school leaders and individuals who provide support to beginning GETs and SETs will want to understand the multi-dimensional aspects of mentoring.

**Constructivism**

In addition to the psychosocial dimensions of mentoring, constructivism is another theory supporting mentoring of beginning teachers. Based on the work of Piaget (1966) and Dewey (1938), constructivism is defined as the active involvement of learners to construct multiple realities among groups of individuals and across cultures. Mentoring is grounded in a constructivist epistemology that requires novice teachers to observe veteran teachers’ performance and then reflect on which strategies are appropriate to implement in the classroom (Moss, 2010). Based on a relationship of trust, veteran teachers (mentors) challenge beginning GETs and SETs (mentees) to reevaluate their values and assumptions so that they may reframe their thinking and change their behavior (Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012).
Teachers are life-long learners who learn while teaching others. Mentees learn by observing mentors’ behavior and adapting practice to improve instruction (Kolb, 1984). To learn from each other, veteran teachers and beginning teachers must invest time and reflect on what is and is not working well in the classroom. As mentors and mentees interact with each other, the pair bonds and develops a deeper level of trust so that a change in behavior is possible. Most importantly, the pair must be willing to learn from each other and let go of misconceptions (Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012). Therefore, a change in attitude is possible, which can have a positive impact on teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their career (Washburn-Moses, 2010).

To influence teachers’ efficacy and commitment, some school districts have implemented teacher learning communities (TLCs) (Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks, & Lai, 2009). TLCs promote teacher engagement, focus on student learning, and provide a benchmark to measure student outcomes (Hellsten et al., 2009). These benefits are possible because teachers are able to interact with all members of the learning community regardless of school location, teaching assignment, or years of service. Moreover, some TLCs build a strong sense of community by providing beginning teachers with access to multiple mentors. The literature refers to this type of mentoring as “relationship constellations” (Hallam, Chou, Hite, & Hite, 2012, p. 262). Relationship constellations are defined as mentoring support provided by multiple individuals (Hallam et al., 2012). Overall, TLCs provide beginning teachers with an opportunity to learn from a wide range of individuals (Hallam et al., 2012), promote an inclusive, intimate working environment (Kram, 1983), and reduce the risk of mentor-mentee incompatibility and disengagement (Hellsten et al., 2009).

**Social Learning Theory**

Kolb’s (1984) research on social learning theory is connected to constructivism. Both
theories hold that knowledge is created based on an individual’s experience (Kolb, 1984). Social learning theory assumes that as an individual observes another person and reflects on past experiences, a learned response occurs. Because of a strong bond with the more experienced individual, the observer will imitate the modeled behavior (Kolb, 1984). Specifically, social learning theory is grounded in experience. Ideas are dynamic and reformed based on experience. Kolb argued that experiential learning contains four dimensions: (a) concrete experience, (b) reflective observation, (c) abstract conceptualization, and (d) active experimentation, all of which are necessary to be an effective learner. Both theories assume that “knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). Mughal (2011) analyzed Kolb’s theory and found that a psychoanalytic dimension was missing, which addresses the emotional struggle of learners. The psychoanalytical dimension may interfere with learning and hinder acquisition of knowledge. Ultimately, the classroom is the place where teachers learn from each other, model expert behavior, and challenge students to learn.

Experiential learning is a critical element of the mentoring process. Experienced teachers model behavior, demonstrate skills, and encourage beginning teachers to apply new knowledge and skills in their classrooms. Synergy is possible when experienced teachers partner with beginning teachers to solve problems of practice. More can be achieved with less energy exerted in a shorter amount of time. Therefore, experiential learning within the context of mentoring will likely have a positive impact on veteran teachers, beginning teachers, and students.

Efficacy Theory

In the late 1980’s, another theory emerged which influenced mentoring. Bandura found that people’s beliefs about their abilities to successfully perform tasks and exhibit behaviors controlled over their lives and determined the level of motivation, effort, and actions (Bandura,
Bandura asserted that individuals with high efficacy tended to visualize success scenarios, whereas individuals with low efficacy tended to visualize failure scenarios (Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 1993). Based on this theory, teachers’ efficacy refers to their ability to deliver instruction and motivate students to learn. Likewise, efficacy theory plays a role in a beginning teacher’s behavior. Not every teaching experience goes as planned. Setbacks and difficulties serve as teachable moments, which require beginning teachers to reflect and commit to change.

Mentors coach beginning teachers through difficult situations, which may affect their efficacy. They encourage and motivate GETs and SETs to overcome adversity by developing strategies to handle tough situations with minimal stress (Bandura, 1993). Critchley and Gibbs (2012) found that teachers’ level of efficacy had a positive impact on motivation, thoughts, and actions. In contrast, problems of practice had a detrimental impact on teachers’ efficacy, commitment, and satisfaction. Overall, efficacy beliefs influence whether or not beginning GETs and SETs will imitate the behavior of experienced teachers (Critchley & Gibbs, 2012).

**Affective Event Theory**

Research on Affective Event Theory (AET) connected environmental factors with perceptions about work (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). An individual must take time to reflect on his or her level of job satisfaction. Research on mood and emotion suggested that time influences one’s level of satisfaction and feelings about work (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). At the core of AET is the notion that affect levels fluctuate and become predictable over time (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Fluctuation in mood and emotion impacts an individual’s attitude, behavior, and commitment to career (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). However, “affective experiences are the more central phenomena of interest with job satisfaction being one
consequence” (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, p. 11). Positive work experiences predict better mood and feelings about work, which result in job satisfaction and vice versa.

To the extent a beginning teacher has positive work experiences, he or she will likely experience high efficacy and commitment to career (Jones & Youngs, 2012). The opposite is also true; a beginning teacher who has negative work experiences will likely experience low efficacy and lack commitment to career (Jones & Youngs, 2012). Positive work experiences may include “listening, sharing experiences, providing encouragement, and engaging mentors and mentees in problem-solving discussions” (Griffin, 2010, p. 17). In contrast, negative work experiences may be lack of emotional support from peers and school leaders. In aggregate, the aforementioned theories provide a foundation for this study and underpin mentoring of beginning teachers.

**Related Literature**

Within the aforementioned theoretical framework, the literature was reviewed and themes were identified that support mentoring of beginning teachers. There is broad agreement in the literature that induction support, mentoring, and retention are essential to address a shortage of qualified beginning teachers (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009; Billingsley et al., 2009; Washburn-Moses, 2010). In the broadest sense, induction support refers to mentoring or “hiring procedures, protected initial assignments, mentor support, and improved evaluation to help novices” (Billingsley et al., 2009, p. 2). More precisely, the literature tends to focus on mentoring of beginning teachers and overlooks the contribution of mentors, mentor coordinators, colleagues, and principals (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009). Likewise, the mentoring literature seldom discusses the influence of school culture on beginning teachers’ efficacy (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009). To address these concerns, the mentoring literature was reviewed to provide a better
understanding of (a) state and local policies that influence induction, (b) pre-service training and mentoring, (c) beginning teachers’ challenges, and (d) the role of principal, mentor, mentor coordinator, and colleagues. Lastly, strategies that impact beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment were discussed.

**Policies Influencing Induction**

**State-level induction support.** District and local administrators must comply with state induction policies to support beginning teachers. Policies provide guidance on who should receive induction support, who should fill the role of mentor, and when training is appropriate (Sindelar, Heretick, Hirsch, Rorrer, & Dawson, 2010). Induction and mentoring policy is state-specific and important for school administrators to understand how policy relates to support of newly hired teachers in their school (Sindelar et al., 2010). In a recent cost-benefit analysis, it was found that “$1 invested in mentoring yields a $1.66 return in the form of increased teacher retention and reduced recruitment, hiring, and professional development” (Sindelar et al., 2010, p. 10). In view of this, induction and mentoring are worthwhile investments for a school district.

In the United States, induction programs focus on general education policy (Kamman & Long, 2010). Policy and practice vary between states. Bay and Parker-Katz (2009) analyzed the education websites of all 50 states and found a 90% agreement rate that mentoring (a) increased teacher retention, (b) advanced teaching performance, and (c) improved student achievement. In 23 states, mentoring is mandatory and support lasts for a period of one to three years. State legislatures in 26 states have allocated funds in the form of grants for induction activities, which may run as high as $5,500 per teacher (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009). For example, California mentors receive $3,200 per new teacher while Connecticut mentors receive $200 per new teacher (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). Furthermore, some states require assessment of beginning
teachers based on state standards and monitor local induction programs to ensure they are of the highest quality (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009). Unfortunately, no state’s website identifies the role, responsibilities, and needs of beginning teachers. Lastly, no state differentiates the needs of beginning GETs as compared to SETs.

To understand school districts’ compliance with state-mandated mentoring policies, Washburn-Moses (2010) surveyed 232 beginning GETs and SETs and found compliance with state-mandated mentoring policy was at 76%, whereas compensation for mentoring and reduced teaching assignment was at 26%. Furthermore, a greater number of mentors were available for beginning GETs than for beginning SETs due to a shortage of highly qualified SETs (Washburn-Moses, 2010). In one study, “76% of general educators and only 64% of special educators reported availability of a mentor” (Washburn-Moses, 2010, p. 15). This finding confirmed previous research that beginning SETs might not be assigned mentors due to lack of a match by subject area and grade level (Billingsley et al., 2009). However, a 2007 study found that “requiring matches by subject area may reduce mentoring quality” (Washburn-Moses, 2010, p. 16). Overall, the literature lacks agreement on whether mentors should be from the same subject area and grade level.

Mentoring support varies based on the state in which beginning teachers reside. In Minnesota, two mentors are assigned to beginning teachers—one school-based and one instructional coach (Sindelar et al., 2010). School-based mentors provide beginning teachers with socialization whereas instructional coaches support the curriculum, instruction, and assessment needs of beginning teachers through the use of online technology (Sindelar et al., 2010).

Some states have a different approach to mentoring of beginning teachers. In California,
mentors meet once a week with novice teachers and assist with planning and classroom management, demonstrate delivery of lessons, provide resources, and facilitate communication with school administrators (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009). In contrast, mentors in Wisconsin support beginning teachers with co-teaching and provide help with Individualized Educational Plan paperwork (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009). Beginning teachers in Louisiana are encouraged to attend evening and weekend classes and take advantage of online support, which has enabled them to persist in their career, earn a master’s degree, and seek leadership positions throughout the district (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009).

Other states require a specific amount of time to support beginning teachers. In Missouri, beginning teachers receive two years of mentoring (Kamman & Long, 2010). The Special School District (SSD) in St. Louis County, Missouri exceeds the minimum standard of two years and provides five years of induction support and a professional growth plan that is updated periodically (Kamman & Long, 2010). The five-year induction program is intended to “build instructional quality, increase student achievement, and retain efficacious teachers” (Kamman & Long, 2010, p. 22). During the first year, classroom support and student behavior are the focus. After beginning teachers implement effective classroom management strategies, they focus on other strategies.

In the second and third years, novice teachers concentrate on effective instruction, student performance, and assessment. Instructional facilitators, also known as mentors, spend at least 25 hours per year with beginning teachers and provide instruction modeling and coaching to ensure that concepts learned in pre-service are effectively implemented (Kamman & Long, 2010). During coaching meetings, facilitators and beginning teachers maintain a log, which documents the improvement plan. The log contains “(a) challenges faced by the beginning teacher, (b) skill
sets related to the challenge, (c) next steps for the instructional facilitator and mentee, and (d) time and focus of the meeting” (Kamman & Long, 2010, p. 24). The log is an objective tool, which enables instructional facilitators to document progress and measure beginning teachers’ improvement over time.

In addition to instructional facilitators, beginning teachers in SSD are assigned school-based mentors. During years four and five, teams of beginning and veteran teachers emphasize evidence-based strategies to increase student achievement (Kamman & Long, 2010). Overall, the two-tiered support of beginning teachers in the SSD has been effective. The retention rate of first and second year teachers ranges between 83% and 96% (Kamman & Long, 2010). The SSD has made significant progress in retention of beginning teachers.

Due to inconsistent mentoring policy throughout the United States, beginning teachers receive different types of support or no support at all (Washburn-Moses, 2010). It is clear that a policy-to-practice gap exists at the state level. Some state’s policies may not be easily understood by school leaders or may be difficult to apply due to lack of sufficient resources (Washburn-Moses, 2010). In view of this, principals should have an understanding of state policies so their schools will comply with regulations and provide the proper amount of support to beginning teachers. As a result, state initiatives will flow down to the local level and have a positive impact on beginning teachers’ commitment and retention (Washburn-Moses, 2010).

**Local-level induction support.** There is broad agreement in the literature that induction support increases commitment and retention of qualified teachers (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009; Billingsley et al., 2009; Washburn-Moses, 2010). Induction support assimilates beginning teachers to the educational setting and provides knowledge of school policies and procedures (Maxwell, Harrington, & Smith, 2010). Induction support increases the likelihood of job
satisfaction and reduces turnover of qualified teachers (Fisher & Ociepka, 2011). Wimmer (2009) studied the induction of 30 beginning teachers and found that beginning teachers of native Canadians had mixed feelings about their pre-service preparation. Despite the fact that beginning teachers acquired strategies to cope with work challenges, they felt unprepared to deal with the high number of students diagnosed with learning disabilities. They preferred hands-on learning and less observation to gain a better understanding of students, their families, and the culture. Experiential learning is a practical way to assimilate beginning GETs and SETs into the learning community.

In special education, beginning SETs may find assimilation quite challenging. Due to a short supply of veteran SETs, beginning SETs may be assigned to mentors in general or special education (Sargent, Gartland, Borinsky, & Durkan, 2009; Sindelar et al., 2010; Washburn-Moses, 2010; Washburn-Moses, & Davis, 2012). Furthermore, beginning SETs may be assigned to mentors in other schools (Perry, 2011). In a quantitative study, Perry (2011) investigated the influence of mentoring on beginning SETs and found that 48 of 59 (81.4%) had mentors in other schools and 33 (57.9%) had mentors who were not in the field of special education. No significant relationship was found between teachers’ intent to stay in special education and type of mentors assigned to beginning teachers. In fact, 55 (94.8%) of the beginning teachers were satisfied with the support they received and intended to persist as SETs (Perry, 2011).

Turnover tends to be the highest among beginning SETs who interact with students with severe disabilities (Perry, 2011). Based on this fact, beginning SETs require mentors who can provide emotional support and evidence-based strategies to address the challenges of the classroom. In 10 studies with an aggregate sample size of 2,260 novices, beginning teachers valued mentoring support, especially when mentors were teachers in special education who
possessed excellent abilities, outstanding interpersonal skills, and met with them at least once a week (Bay and Parker-Katz, 2009, p. 19). As a result, beginning teachers’ confidence and skills increased due to adequate support from their mentors.

In summary, state and local induction policies should be understood by district administrators, principals, and university officials. District administrators and principals should collaborate and implement policies that support the diverse needs of beginning GETs and SETs. Likewise, university mentors should partner with principals to ensure that pre-service teachers’ experience are aligned with regulations, which may increase the likelihood that qualified teachers will remain in their chosen career field.

**Pre-service Training and Mentoring**

Pre-service training is the bridge between the university classroom and in-service teaching. Prior to becoming teachers of record, pre-service teachers receive mentoring while completing coursework to gain a deeper understanding of the teaching and learning process (Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012). During this stage, pre-service teachers may be emotionally vulnerable because they lack in-depth knowledge and experience. Furthermore, pre-services teachers may experience shock due to a mismatch in students’ cultural and socio-economic backgrounds (Maxwell et al., 2010; Taymans, Tindle, Freund, Ortiz, & Harris, 2012). Research suggests that most pre-service teachers are Caucasian females from middle class backgrounds, whereas their students are from diverse cultures, English language learners, and have low socio-economic status (Taymans et al., 2012). To cope with these discrepancies, pre-service teachers may be paired with mentors who provide various types of support such as orientation to the classroom and students’ diverse learning needs.

Mentors play a key role in helping pre-service teachers assimilate to the classroom
environment. Unfortunately, there is little known in the literature about the experiences of mentors assigned to support pre-service teachers. To address this gap, Sayeski and Paulsen (2012) interviewed mentors paired with pre-service teachers and found they provided the following support: (a) curriculum maps and planning guides, (b) lesson materials, (c) verbal and written suggestions, and (d) modeling of teaching strategies. Based on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, pre-service teachers who receive adequate support tend to change their beliefs and assumptions about teaching (Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012). As mentors support pre-service teachers and challenge them to try new strategies, they will likely gain confidence, knowledge, and skills, which can be applied when they enter the classroom as full-time teachers.

Traditional and nontraditional teacher preparation programs provide mentoring support. For pre-service teachers on a traditional route to certification, they interact with mentors certified in the same subject who demonstrate content knowledge, coach, observe without evaluation, and respond in a timely manner to enhance beginners’ learning (Amador-Watson & Sebastian, 2011). They tend to have a greater commitment to teaching when compared with pre-service teachers on a nontraditional route (Amador-Watson & Sebastian, 2011).

Nontraditional pre-service teachers require more mentoring support than traditional pre-service teachers (Amador-Watson & Sebastian, 2011). They learn best from practical teaching experience (Amador-Watson & Sebastian, 2011). The literature suggested that nontraditional candidates required support to gain (a) procedural knowledge based on rules and regulations, (b) instructional knowledge found in lesson plans, (c) conceptual knowledge depending on students’ maturity, (d) emotional knowledge to manage competing deadlines, and (e) philosophical knowledge of the implications of teaching (Amador-Watson & Sebastian, 2011). Regardless of the path to licensure, universities and local schools must work together to support pre-service
teachers and challenge them to transfer knowledge and skills to the classroom.

In a recent study of 68 graduate students in their last semester prior to completing their masters’ degree in Elementary Education from a public college in New York City, O’Connor, Malow, and Bisland (2011) found that pre-service teachers valued information and support of classroom practices, followed by coursework, and mentoring. In addition, the study revealed that 25% of pre-service teachers desired less theoretical and more practical classroom strategies; 13% required a deeper understanding of how to transfer theory to practice; and 15% said that school mentors should model delivering instruction and provide consistent support throughout the year. Of the 68 participants, “30 or 44% said they intended to leave the profession due to school bureaucracy and lack of administrative support” (O’Connor et al., 2011, p. 228). Unfortunately, these pre-service teachers did not receive meaningful support, which discouraged their persistence in their chosen career field.

During pre-service training, beginning teachers learn content-specific pedagogy and teaching strategies to manage the classroom and improve student learning outcomes (Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008). To accomplish this objective, pre-service training emphasizes (a) acquisition and transfer of knowledge, (b) learning from practice, (c) reflection, and (d) connection with a school’s learning community (Sigurdardottir, 2010). Content-specific knowledge is known as domain knowledge and is comprised of the skills and knowledge to teach in a particular content area (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010). In short, domain knowledge is the understanding of how a particular discipline is structured and how students acquire knowledge (Brownell et al., 2010).

Content-specific knowledge is multi-dimensional and a critical component of pre-service teachers’ preparation. Morewood and Condo (2012) refer to content-specific knowledge as
“knowledge-for-practice, knowledge-in-practice, and knowledge-of-practice” (p. 16).

Knowledge-for-practice is the acquisition and transfer of content-specific knowledge to be applied when they enter the classroom as teachers of record. Knowledge-in-practice is teachers’ ability to deliver instruction and respond to challenges in the moment. Lastly, knowledge-of-practice is collaborative learning among members of the learning community. Pre-service teachers lack in-depth knowledge of these domains. In a 2010/2011 study of 50 undergraduate students enrolled in an internship, participants expressed low satisfaction due to lack of understanding how to apply course knowledge to field experiences (Jabery & Khamra, 2013). Overall, multi-dimensional knowledge is acquired after years of experience (Sigurdardottir, 2010; Zeichner, 2010).

Although multi-dimensional knowledge is acquired over time, pre-service teachers bring fresh ideas to the classroom to motivate students to learn content (Fisher & Ociepka, 2011). A constructivist approach to teaching and learning may bring a fresh idea to the classroom and engages disinterested students in the learning process (Ezer, Gilat, & Sagee, 2010). As pre-service teachers gain a better understanding of pedagogy and partner with veteran teachers to meet students’ diverse learning needs, academic gains are possible.

Some pre-service teachers enter the classroom with learning disabilities of their own, which may enhance their sensitivity to the learning needs of students. Pre-service teachers may or may not disclose their disabilities to mentors and teachers of record. Unfortunately, university-based accommodations may not transfer to field settings. As a result, pre-service teachers with disabilities may overcompensate and become perfectionists for fear of receiving a poor evaluation (Csoli & Gallagher, 2012).

To support pre-service teachers, some universities may use video conferencing (VC)
technology (Israel, Knowlton, Griswold, & Rowland, 2009). Video conferencing enables university mentors to observe classroom instruction and student activities. VC allows pre-service teachers and university mentors to communicate in real time by installing a polycom and camera in the classroom (Israel et al., 2009). This new epistemology is an efficient use of 21st century technology and supports the development of pre-service teachers without changing classroom dynamics. Therefore, university coursework and internships that include university mentoring (Israel et al., 2009; Sargent, 2009) and VC (Israel et al., 2009) will likely motivate and encourage pre-service teachers to persist in their chosen career field.

After pre-service teachers complete their internship, they receive feedback from their university mentor and reflect on their experience. Reflection is the key that unlocks teachers’ potential by “deliberately thinking about specific aspects of a lesson… to target areas of improvement” (Trautwein & Ammerman, 2010, p. 192). After reflecting and performing self-evaluation, pre-service teachers are able to refine their practice (Csoli & Gallagher, 2012). If pre-service teachers continuously reflect on their practice, reflection will become a habit that motivates them to look for solutions to students’ learning challenges.

**Challenges of Beginning Teachers**

After pre-service training ends, teachers shift from being responsible for their learning to overseeing the learning of others (Puig & Recchia, 2012; West & Hudson, 2010). Some beginning teachers enter the classroom better equipped than others. Most beginning GETs and SETs are enthusiastic, committed to their career, and equipped with strategies learned during their internship.

In contrast, some beginning teachers feel unprepared for the classroom. They face all types of challenges, which seem overwhelming. They lack sufficient knowledge and experience,
do not ask for help from colleagues or their principal, and feel conflicted about their role
(Mehrenberg, 2013). Some novices struggle with developing a routine, finding appropriate
instructional materials, and developing a classroom management plan (Billingsley et al., 2009).
Additionally, beginning teachers find classroom management, student misbehavior (Shernoff,
Marinez-Lora, Frazier, Jakobsons, & Atkins, 2011), and poor salary (Hallam et al., 2012)
distressing. Furthermore, some beginning teachers feel isolated and anxious (Billingsley et al.,
2009; Hellsten et al., 2009; Washburn et al., 2012). To make matters worse, some novices may
be reluctant to ask for assistance for fear of receiving a poor performance appraisal (Billingsley
et al., 2009; Perez-Gonzalez, 2011).

Beginning SETs face their own set of challenges. Despite their lack of experience,
beginning SETs are treated no differently than veteran SETs and may be assigned heavy
caseloads (Billingsley et al., 2009; Hellsten et al., 2009). Billingsley et al. (2009) found that one
beginning teacher had a case load of 50 students. Regardless of case load, beginning SETs are
expected to function with the same expertise, efficiency, and efficacy as veteran teachers
(Hellsten et al., 2009).

To cope with the challenges in special education, beginning SETs may be assigned to
mentors. Research suggests that 65% of beginning SETs have access to mentors (Washburn et
al., 2012). Without the support of mentors, beginning SETs tend to struggle with paperwork
(Mehrenberg, 2013), referrals, evaluations, and classroom management (Billingsley et al., 2009).
On average, SETs spend five hours per week doing paperwork (Mehrenberg, 2013). In a study
of 18 beginning SETs across 12 states, Mehrenberg (2013) found that the majority of participants
were overwhelmed with paperwork, which took too much time and lacked purpose. On a
positive note, some participants received help from mentors and colleagues to complete
paperwork by the due date. Overall, beginning SETs have a negative view of paperwork and may influence job satisfaction and commitment to career (Mehrenberg, 2013).

Other beginning SETs feel under paid, micromanaged, and unappreciated (Eson-Brizo, 2010). Their struggles may be overlooked by veteran teachers and principals. Unfortunately, veteran teachers may not have time to interact with novice SETs due to their own set of challenges. Likewise, principals may not understand the challenges that beginning SETS face due to focusing on school-wide issues.

To address the challenges of beginning GETs and SETs, research suggests that informal support is necessary (Sindelar, et al., 2010). Informal support that addresses emotional concerns, answers procedural questions, and suggests effective curricular strategies will likely provide teachers with greater satisfaction (Billingsley et al., 2009; Sindelar et al., 2010; Washburn et al., 2012). Overall, a multi-dimensional approach may be the most effective strategy to meet the needs of beginning teachers.

**Role of Principal**

The primary role of principals is inclusion (Hallam et al., 2012). In the educational literature, inclusion is defined as “a process of increasing participation and decreasing exclusion from the culture, community, and curricula of a mainstream school” (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2010, p. 814). In an inclusive learning environment, principals ensure teachers work together, receive the proper amount of support, and achieve school-wide goals (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2010). Furthermore, principals encourage teachers to implement evidence-based instructional practices (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2010). When everyone’s contribution is valued and respected, participation will likely increase throughout the learning community.

Principals may increase participation and inclusion by pairing beginning GETs and SETs
with mentors (Correa & Wagner, 2011; Fick, 2011; Griffin, 2010; Roach, Smith, & Boutin, 2011). As beginning teachers interact with mentors, they acquire more knowledge and confidence to address classroom challenges (Billingsley et al., 2009). Research suggests that mentors situated in the same building provided better support to beginning teachers than district-assigned mentors because of their close proximity, established friendships, and knowledge of the school’s culture and norms (Hallam et al., 2012). In view of this research, principals will want to position mentors close to beginning teachers, which will send a message that they care about the success and emotional wellbeing of beginning teachers. Fick (2011) investigated the effect of principals on mentoring of beginning teachers and found that they should interact regularly with mentors and beginning teachers to understand the viability of the relationship. Overall, principals play a strategic role in support of beginning teachers.

In an inclusive learning environment, collaboration is an essential component (Correa & Wagner, 2011; Fisher & Ociepka, 2011; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2010; Roach et al., 2011; Voltz & Collins, 2010) and improves instruction (Correa & Wagner, 2011; Leko & Smith, 2010). As instructional leader, principals ensure that teachers have sufficient time to interact and focus on the learning needs of students (Leko & Smith, 2010; Voltz & Collins, 2010). As teachers interact and share resources, a deeper sense of community evolves (Henley et al., 2010). Principals promote inclusion by emphasizing relationship-building, communication, co-planning (Henley et al., 2010), collegiality (Hallam et al., 2012), and professional development (Leko & Smith, 2010).

Professional development is the capstone of an inclusive learning environment and increases pedagogy, interaction with colleagues, and sense of community (Leko & Smith, 2010). For beginning teachers, they require instruction on topics such as “(a) collaborating with general
educators, (b) completing Individualized Educational Plans, (c) interacting with paraprofessionals, (d) managing stress, and (e) communicating effectively with parents and caregivers” (Leko & Smith, 2010, p. 323). To the extent a principal provides professional development opportunities, beginning teachers will acquire in-depth knowledge to improve instruction and student outcomes.

There is broad agreement in the literature that beginning SETs require differentiated support from principals to remain committed to their assignment (Billingsley et al., 2009; Correa & Wagner, 2011; Griffin, 2010; Henley et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2013; Kealy, 2010; Leko & Smith, 2010; Sindelar et al., 2010; Voltz & Collins, 2010). If principals fail to provide meaningful support, research suggests that beginning teachers will turn to peers for guidance (Correa & Wagner, 2011). If peers fail to provide adequate support, beginning teachers may leave the profession prematurely. In a national study of 11,053 beginning SETs, they chose to stay in education until retirement at schools with an inclusive learning environment (Correa & Wagner, 2011). This finding suggests that teacher retention may be influenced by principals who desire emotionally healthy schools where teachers are supportive, share resources, and focus on student outcomes (Henley et al., 2010).

To support and retain beginning SETs, savvy principals will likely implement a strategy that is multi-dimensional. First, principals may arrange for training on completion of Individualized Educational Plan paperwork (Correa & Wagner, 2011; Leko & Smith, 2010), ensure SETs are introduced to key stakeholders, and schedule release time to interact with school psychologists, guidance counselors, therapists, and the district coordinator of special education (Griffin, 2010; Leko & Smith, 2010). Research suggests that “teachers with strong principal support reported greater job satisfaction, higher levels of commitment, more professional
development opportunities, greater collegial support, fewer role problems, and less stress and burnout than their less supported peers” (Billingsley et al., 2009, p. 10). To the extent principals take a keen interest in beginning SETs, they will likely feel supported and committed to their school and profession.

Second, principals with a high degree of emotional intelligence will evaluate the workload of beginning SETs. Some principals have shifted Individualized Educational Plan reporting to other staff members such as guidance counselors, school psychologists, therapists, and paraprofessionals (Leko & Smith, 2010). The shift of responsibility frees up additional time for teachers to coplan and develop instructional strategies. Recent research found that paperwork was the leading cause of stress and burnout of SETs (Leko & Smith, 2010; Mehrenberg, 2013). In the long run, the decision to redistribute paperwork may pay off in higher retention and greater job satisfaction for beginning SETs (Correa & Wagner, 2011; Leko & Smith, 2010).

Third, principals will likely assign mentors to SETs that are nonevaluative, teach students of similar disabilities at the same grade level, and are knowledgeable of special education policy and practices (Billingsley et al., 2009; Correa & Wagner, 2011; Griffin, 2010; Leko & Smith, 2010; Sindelar et al., 2010). In a non-evaluative environment, beginning teachers feel free to discuss problems of practice without fear of losing their jobs (Griffin, 2010). Overall, effective principals implement a strategy that provides a differentiated approach to support beginning teachers.

Role and Characteristics of a Mentor

Veteran teachers may be called upon to mentor beginning teachers (mentees). Mentors may be veteran teachers who form a joint venture with mentees to apply newly acquired knowledge (Gallagher, Abbott-Shim, & VandeWiele, 2011), a coalition formed to reproduce
beliefs and values in mentees (McClelland, 2009), observe, listen (Madigan & Scroth-Cavataio, 2012), model, coach, question, reflect (Gallagher et al., 2011), support, pass on pedagogical knowledge (Capizzi, Wehby, & Sandmel, 2010), and develop a meaningful relationship based on trust that enables the pair to learn from each other (Hellsten et al., 2009). The newly-formed mentor-mentee relationship has the potential to flourish because mentors provide non-evaluative support, collaboration, and empathy for beginning teachers who assume the role of mentees (Madigan & Scroth-Cavataio, 2012). Beginning teachers in the first five years of their career may be assigned a mentor and receive support for a predetermined amount of time (Washburn-Moses, 2010).

Emotionally-savvy mentors may vividly remember their struggles during the early years of teaching and desire better experiences for their mentees. After listening to and understanding their mentees’ challenges, mentors may provide various types of support such as: (a) role-playing; (b) co-teaching; (c) positive feedback; (d) coaching to anticipate outcomes; and (e) allow mentees to vent to clear the air (Madigan & Scroth-Cavataio, 2012). Overall, mentees’ challenges may be solved through truthful discussion with mentors who model and pass on effective strategies learned from years of practice.

As the relationship grows, mentors and mentees function as a tight-knit team (Madigan & Scroth-Cavataio, 2012). As a team, mentors and mentees collaborate to overcome challenges of practice (Hallam et al., 2012). Effective mentors are accessible, listen, brainstorm strategies for mentees to implement, and document successes and challenges during weekly meetings (Madigan & Scroth-Cavataio, 2012). When problems arise, mentors and mentees understand that they must work together to resolve issues (Madigan & Scroth-Cavataio, 2012).

To benefit from the mentoring process, mentors and mentees reflect on their practice
Reflection enables mentors and mentees to think about the rationale for decisions and develop strategies that may be put into practices and passed on to others at a later date (Madigan & Scroth-Cavataio, 2012). Overall, reflection provides quality time to reminisce about one’s calling and think of practical ways to improve practice (Hallam et al., 2012).

In summary, mentors counsel, instruct, collaborate, and function as change agents (Madigan & Scroth-Cavataio, 2012). As change agents, mentors encourage mentees to modify their thinking and behavior. Small changes in thinking and behavior that improve instructional outcomes will likely have a positive impact on beginning teachers’ success and the school’s mentoring program.

**Role of Mentor Coordinator**

A school’s mentoring program is the responsibility of a mentor coordinator. A mentor coordinator will likely train potential mentors prior to pairing them with mentees (Gallagher et al., 2011). During training, a mentor coordinator will likely discuss the advantages and disadvantages of mentoring such as remuneration, power, influence, career satisfaction, and potential for dysfunction (Feldman, 1999; Scandura, 1998). In a recent study, a mentor coordinator provided mentor candidates with 50 hours of training focused on reflective practice (Gallagher et al., 2011). Candidates were asked to bring a question or problem to class so that the group could analyze it and develop an effective teaching strategy. As an outcome of training, mentors were encouraged to form a teacher learning community and met with the coordinator on a monthly basis to discuss mentoring issues and interactions with mentees. As a result, mentors felt supported, received answers to questions, and passed along effective strategies to mentees (Gallagher et al., 2011). A wise mentor coordinator will understand that training is an important component of a successful mentoring program.
After training, mentors and beginning teachers are paired up and encouraged to work together to improve practice. Most mentoring relationships function appropriately. Despite training, some relationships become dysfunctional (Scandura, 1998). Kram (1983) proposed that some relationships require early termination due to fear, hostility, or resentment from one or both parties. The dysfunctional side of mentoring is often overlooked in the literature (McClelland, 2009; Scandura, 1998) but important for mentor coordinators and principals to understand, evaluate, and guard against.

Dysfunctional mentoring may occur due to pairing of two individuals who have incompatible personalities, interpersonal styles, and demographics (Scandura, 1998). The literature defines dysfunction as “one or both parties’ needs not being met in the relationship or one or both parties suffering distress from being in the relationship” (Scandura, 1998, p. 453). The locus of dysfunction stems from pairing individuals who carry emotional baggage from other relationships. Immature behavior may range from envy, jealousy, distrust, anger, sexual overtones, bullying, and betrayal of confidences, which may stem from unresolved parent-child or family struggles (Scandura, 1998). Furthermore, mentors may intentionally act out and sabotage mentees’ work (McClelland, 2009). All things considered, mentors may have pathology that convinces them that they are acting in their mentees’ best interest, which may hinder them from being successful or result in turnover (McClelland, 2009).

Dysfunctional behavior may have a negative impact on mentors, mentees, and the school. Based on Scandura’s (1998) Dysfunctional Mentoring and Outcomes Model, mentees may experience a decrease in self-esteem, initiative, and job satisfaction. Likewise, mentors may experience high levels of stress and anxiety and lash out at mentees for not sharing their beliefs and values. As a result, mentees may feel discouraged and hopeless, which may lead to a poor
performance review and dismissal (Scandura, 1998). This disturbing outcome is avoidable if coordinators address dysfunctional behavior as soon as possible.

Dysfunctional behavior has been linked to mentors who assume the role of “gate-keeper” (McClelland, 2009, p. 63). Gatekeepers tend to believe that mentees should share their beliefs, values, and behavior (McClelland, 2009) and meet their expectations (Scandura, 1998). Unfortunately, mentees may refuse to be influenced by their mentors and experience harsh treatment. If treated inappropriately, mentees need to advocate for themselves and inform the coordinator that the relationship is not meeting their needs. Social learning that lacks emotional maturity and self-control may have a devastating impact on mentees (McClelland, 2009) and mentors (Feldman, 1999). As a result, termination of the relationship may be the only viable solution to protect the wellbeing of both parties.

The coordinator must inform the pair that dysfunctional behavior will not be tolerated and may result in termination of the relationship (Scandura, 1998). Research suggests that mentors tend to receive the lion’s share of blame for dysfunction due to their position and power over mentees (Scandura, 1998). Feldman (1999) disagreed with Scandura (1998) and argued that both parties contribute to dysfunctional behavior and outcomes.

It is possible that veteran teachers assigned to mentor beginning teachers may display dysfunctional behavior. Due to deep feelings of attachment, beginning teachers may admire their mentors and deny any type of mistreatment (McClelland, 2009). In the long run, beginning teachers may feel that mistreatment is a small price to pay for long term career success.

In summary, savvy coordinators will provide training to mentors and mentees, check regularly on the emotional health of the relationship, and develop a plan to detect and deal with inappropriate behavior. It is important to match mentors with mentees who have similar
interests, are friends, and trust each other, which will likely keep the relationship in tact (Feldman, 1999). Although the relationship can be challenging at times, mentors and beginning teachers benefit from mentoring by increasing job satisfaction and retention.

**Role of Colleagues**

Colleagues play an important role in retention of beginning teachers. Collegial support may provide beginning teachers with a sense of acceptance, connection to peers, and understanding of their role and responsibilities (Jones et al., 2013; Shernoff et al., 2011). Beginning GETs and SETs value formal and informal mentoring, co-planning, and collaboration with peers (Jones et al., 2013). Formal mentoring consists of scheduled meetings, observations by mentors, and professional development (Billingsley et al., 2009). In contrast, informal mentoring consists of unannounced classroom visits, personal notes of affirmation, and shared teaching materials (Billingsley et al., 2009). Most importantly, “a common planning period with other colleagues or collaborating with other teachers on instruction increased the rate of retention of beginning teachers by more than 43%” (Jones et al., 2013, p. 368). Overall, both formal and informal mentoring supports the needs of beginning teachers.

In special education, “90% of beginning teachers viewed informal assistance from teachers in their building and from other colleagues as helpful to a moderate or great extent” (Billingsley et al., 2009, p. 25). In schools where a high rate of poverty exists, Billingsley et al. (2009) found that beginning teachers preferred informal support (96.4%) to formal support (57.7%). Furthermore, beginning teachers who lacked collegial support were at risk of burnout and turnover (Jones et al., 2013). In a sample of 185 beginning teachers in both general and special education, Jones et al. (2013) investigated acceptance, collegial support, and commitment to school and found that collegial support was a strong predictor of commitment to the teaching
assignment and school. For beginning SETs, there was a strong positive correlation between collective responsibility and commitment to school. Shernoff et al. (2011) extended the concept and argued that feeling connected to colleagues motivated beginning teachers to try new teaching strategies. All in all, collegial support has a positive impact on beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their career.

**Strategies Impacting Efficacy and Commitment**

The literature proposed strategies that benefit principals, mentors, and mentor coordinators and support traditional face-to-face and virtual mentoring of beginning teachers. In-service mentoring, virtual mentoring, collaboration, co-teaching, and social networking are tactics that impact beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to career. If implemented effectively, these evidence-based tactics may determine whether beginning GETs and SETs will remain committed to their career. In aggregate, these strategies have the potential to stimulate interaction, promote professional development, and increase retention of beginning teachers.

**In-service mentoring.** Prior to 1990, there was little written about in-service mentoring in the educational literature (Hobson et al., 2009). Mentoring is defined as support of a less experienced practitioner by a more experienced practitioner or “situated cognition and learning” (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009, p. 208), “a formalized relationship between a beginning teacher and a master teacher” (Washburn et al., 2012, p. 59), conceptualized practice shaped by culture, curriculum, and teaching (Wang et al., 2008), or interaction, phone follow-up, online forums, or in-class modeling (Dempsey & Christenson-Foggett, 2011).

Mentoring is a strategy intended to increase support and retention of beginning teachers (Dempsey & Christenson-Foggett, 2011; Wang et al., 2008; Washburn et al., 2012). Over the course of time, mentors and beginning teachers develop a relationship based on trust and
honesty, which enables them to improve the quality of instruction (Wang et al., 2008; Washburn et al., 2012). In a meta-analysis of 43 studies of in-service mentoring, results revealed that mentoring focused primarily on career and job satisfaction and secondarily on compensation, salary, and promotion (Allen, Eby, Poteet, & Lentz, 2004). As mentors invest time and model exemplary teaching skills, beginning teachers will likely learn effective teaching skills and implement them in the classroom (Washburn et al., 2012).

A constructivist approach to mentoring provides support to mentors, mentees, and schools (Wang et al., 2008). Mentors model a preferred style of teaching and encourage mentees to reflect and develop their own ideas and methods of teaching that are appropriate for the situation and context (Wang et al., 2008). When a constructivist approach was implemented, mentors reported “high levels of efficacy due to learning through self-reflection, gaining new ideas and perspectives, learning new teaching styles and strategies, increased recognition by peers, and a revitalized career” (Hobson et al., 2009, p. 209). Likewise, mentees reported reduced isolation and increased efficacy, self-reflection, and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, this type of approach tends to increase retention of teachers and reduce the number of transfers within a school district (Hobson et al., 2009). Overall, a constructivist approach to mentoring enables mentors and mentees to adjust their practice to accommodate their personality, teaching style, and learning environment.

Well-defined mentoring programs tend to increase beginning teachers’ efficacy (Hobson et al., 2009). The challenge for principals is to determine which mentoring model best supports the needs of beginning teachers. Perez-Gonzalez (2011) evaluated a two-year school district mentoring program in rural Texas and found that mentors appreciated the training they received. Similarly, beginning teachers valued professional development days and support from their
assigned mentor in the form of “feedback on lesson presentations, modeling of lessons, answering questions, and verbal praise” (Perez-Gonzalez, 2011, p. 93). Unfortunately, beginning teachers lacked support from administrators and mentors disclosed confidential conversations to colleagues (Perez-Gonzalez, 2011). Thus, the mere presence of a mentoring program does not guarantee positive outcomes.

Not all mentoring programs are of the same quality. Some mentoring programs lack well-defined goals, contain vague criteria for matching mentors with mentees, have misaligned mentor-mentee schedules, have limited release time for collaboration, and lack topics for discussion during mentor-mentee collaboration (Barrera et al., 2010). As a result, poorly-defined mentoring programs may have a devastating impact on beginning teachers, mentors, and schools (Hobson et al., 2009).

Research suggests that quality mentoring programs will (a) train and develop mentors and mentees, (b) pair mentors with mentees within the same certification and school, (c) allow for common planning time, (d) provide opportunity for mentors and mentees to observe each other, (e) reduce workload of mentors and mentees, (f) engage a broad network of teachers, (g) assess mentees using formal standards, and (h) provide mentoring beyond three years (Andrews et al., 2007; Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Washburn-Moses, 2010). Most importantly, mentoring benefits mentors and mentees. The mentoring relationship provides the pair with quality time to interact and reflect on experiences, as well as opportunity to adopt new ways of delivering instruction (Dempsey & Carty, 2009). However, there is lack of agreement in the literature as to which mentoring strategy is most effective (Hobson et al., 2009). As a result, some school districts provide virtual mentoring in lieu of face-to-face mentoring (Dempsey & Carty, 2009).

Virtual mentoring. Virtual mentoring is growing in popularity due to greater usage of
Web 2.0 tools (Billingsley, Israel, & Smith, 2011; Israel, Carnahan, Snyder, & Williamson, 2012) and social computing tools (Maxwell et al., 2010). Virtual mentoring is defined as remote support through the use of technology (Dempsey & Carty, 2009) or use of e-mail, discussion boards, chat rooms, blogs, and Web conferencing to support beginning teachers’ knowledge and confidence (Smith & Israel, 2010). Social learning theory offers justification for virtual mentoring—ideas are formed and reformed on the basis of experience (Kolb, 1984). For beginning teachers, the classroom provides the context to learn in the moment (Israel et al., 2012). As knowledge is constructed, beginning teachers gain a better understanding of what they do and do not know.

Virtual mentoring is asynchronous and not limited by time and place (Maxwell et al., 2010; Smith & Israel, 2010). Mentors and mentees are free to interact, reveal inadequacies, receive feedback, and take extended time to ponder feedback and respond, which may increase trust and deepen the relationship (Maxwell et al., 2010). Thus, interacting virtually day or night may improve mentors and mentees’ efficacy.

A virtual mentoring site may contain information related to content and standards, effective instruction, assessment, behavior management, collaboration, time management, or strategies to deal with stress (Billingsley et al., 2011). Virtual mentoring provides a secure place to interact with others and leave candid comments about day-to-day experiences (Smith & Israel, 2010). When resources are limited, virtual mentoring is an efficient way to provide beginning teachers with support and professional development. Most importantly, beginning teachers have access to support on-demand and may benefit those who have been paired with incompatible mentors, mentors outside of their content area, or have no access to a mentor (Israel et al., 2012; Maxwell et al., 2010).
The literature suggests that computer-based communication should be as natural as possible (Israel et al., 2012) and paired with face-to-face support (Donne & Lin, 2013). A blend of asynchronous discussion board forums, synchronous real-time chats, and video-based communications should be utilized to provide immediate feedback to beginning teachers (Israel et al., 2012; Smith & Israel, 2010). In a study of 51 mentors supporting beginning teachers via virtual mentoring, e-mail was used to interact with mentees 76% of the time, discussion boards captured reflections 59% of the time, and chat sessions with mentors were used 24% of the time (Billingsley et al., 2009). In a study of 10 e-mentoring programs, all 10 used asynchronous discussion boards, and five used synchronous chats. Only three of the 10 used video or audio technology, which is a progressive approach to the support of beginning teachers (Smith & Israel, 2010). In some school districts, “bug-in-ear” devices provide support and immediate feedback to beginning teachers (Israel et al., 2012, p. 198). Even when video and audio options were available, beginning teachers preferred asynchronous text-based e-mail and discussion boards to interact with mentors because they were available between 8 a.m. and 12 a.m. (Smith & Israel, 2010).

A virtual mentoring site is a practical approach to support beginning teachers (Israel et al., 2012). A small university constructed a virtual mentoring site and found that beginning SETs needed (a) support to complete Individualized Educational Plan paperwork, (b) help with behavior management, and (c) appropriate curriculum resources (Donne & Lin, 2013). As a result, the university developed a wiki. A wiki is a “collaborative online writing environment to connect colleagues, share knowledge and experiences, provide resources, promote question seeking, and encourage reflection in teaching” (Donne & Lin, 2013, p. 43). The university tracked usage of the wiki over the course of a year and found an 83% utilization rate (Donne &
In view of this, a wiki has the potential to support beginning teachers, requires no added skills to maintain the site, and is accessible at any time (Donne & Lin, 2013). All in all, a wiki is an effective Web 2.0 tool that may provide beginning teachers with differentiated support on-demand.

Program facilitators oversee virtual mentoring and the online site (Smith & Israel, 2010). They “build relationships with mentors and mentees, provide professional development, assign specific roles, and interact within a discussion board environment to ensure success of the e-mentoring program” (Smith & Israel, 2010, p. 38). As greater numbers of beginning teachers interact with program facilitators and receive support, knowledge gaps shrink and skills increase throughout the entire learning community. Overall, a wiki supports beginning teachers but requires additional research to determine the specific impact on retention of SETs (Donne & Lin, 2013).

Some beginning teachers may be reluctant to interact on a virtual site due to fear of breach of confidentiality (Billingsley et al., 2011). To overcome reluctance, program facilitators may develop a password-protected site and distribute instructions on how to connect to and navigate the site (Billingsley et al., 2011). Likewise, principals may want to communicate that the goal of the virtual mentoring site is to support and develop beginning teachers and not to evaluate them (Donne & Lin, 2013). As technology continues to advance, virtual mentoring will likely be the most effective and efficient way to support and develop technology savvy teachers in the 21st century (Billingsley et al., 2011).

**Collaboration.** Another essential method to support beginning teachers is a collaborative school culture. Collaboration flourishes in a culture of shared responsibility for teachers’ well-being that deemphasizes evaluation (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009)
and encourages cooperation (Bashan & Holsblat, 2012). Collaboration is important because beginning teachers lack experience, have many questions, and need to interact with peers to align expectations with reality. Furthermore, collaboration with experienced teachers is imperative to prevent inappropriate referral of students to special education (Stein, 2011). Due to lack of experience, beginning teachers have a tendency to arrive at premature conclusions about students’ disabilities when, in fact, collaboration is needed to evaluate internal and external factors such as students’ home support, educational history, culture, and linguistic ability (Stein, 2011).

In special education, collaboration is essential between linguistic specialists and classroom SETs. “Teachers working with these students require a significant knowledge base, special skills, and information” (Stein, 2011, p.37). In view of this, principals will likely schedule sufficient time for teachers to interact during the day. Principals who value collaboration develop a workforce that is knowledgeable, better adjusted, and responsive to students’ needs (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). All in all, well-adjusted teachers collaborate to improve student outcomes, which may result in adoption of a co-teaching model of instruction.

**Co-teaching.** In the 1980s, co-teaching was evident in some classrooms across the United States (Pugach & Winn, 2011). By 2004, the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act propelled co-teaching to the forefront of inclusive classrooms (Pugach & Winn, 2011). Co-teaching is defined as joint delivery of instruction (Bashan & Holsblat, 2012), a specific form of collaboration (Treaty & Gurganus, 2010), and shared responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction within the same classroom (Pugach & Winn, 2011; Treaty & Gurganus, 2010) by GETs and SETs.
Principals promote co-teaching by reducing isolation between GETs and SETs, which tends to increase collaboration (Pugach & Winn, 2011). Research suggests that teachers who volunteered to co-teach out of respect and admiration for peers were more satisfied than teachers who did not volunteer to co-teach (Pugach & Winn, 2011). Generally, teachers who co-taught expected to be treated as equal professionals, which may not always be the case due to “turf and ownership problems” (Pugach & Winn, 2011, p. 39). To overcome turf and ownership problems, principals way want to encourage teachers and school personnel to work together. As a result, teamwork will make it possible to achieve school objectives.

Co-teaching works best when combined with joint planning, mentoring, and modeling (Bashan & Holsblat, 2012). Joint planning enables teachers to clarify roles and understand who will lead and who will support instruction while ensuring that instruction meets the diverse needs of students (Bashan & Holsblat, 2012). Within the context of mentoring, the senior team member “imitates a preferred way of teaching” to help the beginning teacher link theoretical knowledge learned in college with practice (Bashan & Holsblat, 2012, p. 208). In a meta-analysis of six co-teaching studies, co-teaching moderately improved student outcomes (Pugach & Winn, 2011). When co-teaching is paired with cooperation, joint planning enables beginning teachers to value different frames of reference (Bashan & Holsblat, 2012).

Co-teaching has its own set of challenges. Co-teachers may disagree on their roles (Bashan & Holsblat, 2012), have different personalities and teaching styles, and lack joint planning time and administrative support (Pugach & Winn, 2011). Furthermore, role confusion may be an issue. The GET may assume the lead role because the co-teacher, who may be a SET or beginning teacher, lacks sufficient content knowledge (Pugach & Winn, 2011). In a support role, the SET or beginning teacher may be relegated to roaming the classroom, teaching small
groups, or managing peer tutoring (Pugach & Winn, 2011). As a result, the SET may not have an opportunity to provide “appropriate and specially designed instruction,” which may adversely impact their commitment and retention (Pugach & Winn, 2011, p. 37). In contrast, the beginning teacher may feel quite fulfilled in a support role and develop greater confidence and skill by observing good instructional practice on a daily basis. Despite the aforementioned challenges, Bashan and Holsblat (2012) argued that compatibility superseded volunteering within a co-teaching model of instruction. Therefore, principals should consider teachers’ compatibility before allowing them to pair up and co-teach.

**Social networking.** Technology savvy teachers enter the classroom well connected to family, friends, and colleagues on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets. As part of a global economy, some employers in the United States understand the value of networking and permit workers to interact and share knowledge with peers via the Internet during working hours. In a two-year study of barriers to obtaining a mentor, Blickle, Schneider, Meurs, and Perrewe (2010) found that networking with other employees improved the likelihood of support from mentors and peers.

Social networking is growing in popularity in some schools. Finland encourages SETs to network with peers to reduce isolation. In a case study of three Finnish beginning SETs, Tuomainen, Palonen, and Hakkarainen (2012) investigated teachers’ networking practices regarding information sharing, collaboration, informal interactions, and professional networking outside the school and found that participants were well connected across the learning community. Of the three participants, one collaborated with six teachers, while the other two collaborated with as many as 11 teachers. Unfortunately, the participants were viewed as outsiders by peers in their local school. Nonetheless, school staff interacted with the SETs
because of their knowledge and expertise on specific topics. To cope with isolation, the participants collaborated regularly, shared resources, exchanged experiences, and attended training sessions as a group. Furthermore, the participants socialized together to provide each other with support outside of school. This study illustrates that physical and emotional isolation are experienced by beginning SETs.

McCray (2012) agreed with Tuomainen et al. (2012) that a supportive network was essential and provided beginning SETs with a sense of efficacy and immediate support. Networking tends to reduce isolation and the likelihood of burn out and turnover (McCray, 2012; Tuomainen et al., 2012). As a result, principals will want to create opportunities to connect beginning teachers with others in the learning community to increase efficacy and retention.

**Summary**

Schools continue to experience a high rate of turnover among beginning teachers. Factors impacting turnover are multi-faceted and require the attention of school leaders and individuals responsible for providing mentoring support. Most importantly, turnover impacts teachers’ morale, efficacy, and commitment to their career (Andrews et al., 2007; Fantilli & McDougal, 2009; Jones & Youngs, 2012). In the United States, approximately one in two beginning teachers leaves the profession within the first five years (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). To encourage retention of beginning teachers, some states adopted laws that require school districts to provide support via face-to-face and/or virtual mentoring, which requires the district and local school to invest time and money to train mentors and mentees.

Due to fiscal constraints, not all beginning teachers are mentored and leave the profession prematurely (Washburn-Moses, 2010). Teacher support strategies have been the primary focus of schools to attract, retain, and develop highly qualified beginning teachers. Unfortunately,
Beginning teacher support strategies have not effectively addressed retention. The literature on this topic supports the premise that mentoring may have a positive impact on beginning teachers’ efficacy, commitment, and retention.

Chapter Three will describe the methodology for this comparative phenomenological study. Specifically, the design, research questions, researcher’s role, participants, setting, and procedures will be discussed. Then, the researcher will describe data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Chapter Three describes the methodology used to understand how mentoring impacts beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their career in a school district in the northeastern part of the United States. Specifically, this chapter details the research design, questions, researcher’s role, participants, setting, and procedures. Lastly, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations were discussed.

Design

The researcher followed good practices for qualitative research and chose a comparative phenomenological design to explore the impact of mentoring on K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their school and career. Specifically, the researcher explored the perceptions of participants in two different groups, K-12 beginning general education teachers (GETs) and special education teachers (SETs), compared and contrasted their experiences, amount of mentoring they received, and impact of mentoring on their efficacy and commitment to their career. Although the literature does not contain a definition of comparative phenomenology, it can be inferred from the design.

In the broadest sense, a phenomenological design explores a legitimate phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) argued that “phenomenology is based on reality as it appears to individuals” (p. 491). Furthermore, Husserl (2014) viewed phenomenology as “a fundamental science of philosophy… a science of phenomena… to realize absolute knowledge” (p. 3). Absolute knowledge is achieved by using the researcher’s five senses to vicariously understand the experiences of others (Husserl, 2014). Schutz (2010) argued that “world-experience is not private, but shared experience” (p. 15). Based on shared experience and
perception of reality, individuals describe their experience from multiple angles (Husserl, 2014; Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology is a “science of realities” (Husserl, 2014, p. 5). Perceived reality is determined by individuals living in “separate worlds of experience joined together through interconnections of actual experience to form a single intersubjective world” (Schutz, 2010, p. 14). Thus, the researcher used her five senses and embraced “the epoche process” to obtain a new meaning of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22).

To fully understand the phenomenon, the researcher explored the whole and its parts. Moustakas (1994) argued that “it is possible to separate my experience of it as a whole, to take one angle of it and look freshly once more, and then another angle, connecting each looking with my conscious experience” (p. 93). Thus, the researcher looked at the overall experience of what it means to be a beginning teacher who received mentoring, and analyzed the parts by comparing the experiences of beginning GETs with SETs. Then, the researcher used “experiential intuition” (Husserl, 2014, p. 11) to describe the phenomenon texturally and structurally (Moustakas, 1994). Specifically, the researcher described what happened in context and contemplated why the experience came to be what it was. Lastly, the researcher used “predictive thinking” to condense the experience to its essence (Husserl, 2014, p. 13).

In summary, a phenomenological design provides insight to the phenomenon. However, a comparative phenomenological design, which describes the overall experience and compares and contrasts the experience within two smaller groups, resulted in a more robust and systematic exploration. Therefore, a comparative phenomenological design was the best design for this particular study.
Research Questions

To understand the experiences of K-12 beginning teachers who receive mentoring, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the challenges of K-12 beginning teachers and strategies used to overcome challenges?
2. What are the perceptions of beginning GETs about beginning SETs and vice versa?
3. What obstacles prevent effective mentoring of beginning teachers?
4. How do mentors support beginning teachers?
5. How do school administrators support beginning teachers?
6. How does a district mentoring program and mentor coordinator support beginning teachers?

Setting

This study focused on beginning teachers in a school district in the north eastern part of the United States. The school district was selected because they have a robust mentoring program in its first decade and have mentored 86 teachers (MTA Webmaster, 2013). In addition, the researcher was acquainted with the district superintendent and several general education and special education teachers because her children attended school in this district. These relationships resulted in the study’s approval by the school district. Therefore, this school district was an appropriate setting for the study.

Participants

Study participants consisted of nine beginning teachers (five GETs and four SETs), four principals, eight mentors, and a mentor coordinator. With a sole researcher, the targeted sample size of approximately 10 beginning teachers was determined. For a phenomenological study,
Creswell (2013) suggested a sample size of between 5 to 25 participants.

Criterion sampling was used to select participants for the study. Creswell (2013) suggested the use of criterion sampling to ensure all participants meet the same conditions, which enhances the quality of the study. Because beginning teachers are defined as having five or fewer years of teaching experience (Dempsey & Carty, 2009), the teachers in the sample met this criteria. Therefore, the researcher selected beginning teachers based on the following criteria: (a) employed in the school district with five or fewer years of experience, (b) a first year teacher being currently mentored or has been mentored within the last five years, and (c) teaches full or part time in the school district.

**Procedures**

This inquiry sought to understand the impact of mentoring on K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their school and career by means of interviews, multiple observations, a focus group interview, and inspection of site documents. After the proposal and subsequent changes were approved by Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board (see Appendices B & C), and the researcher received written approval from the school district (see Appendix D), data collection began.

First, the researcher piloted interview and focus group questions with teachers from surrounding school districts and asked for feedback to establish face and content validity (see Appendix E). Specifically, two beginning teachers, two veteran teachers, and two individuals who have earned doctoral degrees, as proxy for principals participated in the pilot. Based on their feedback, interview questions and focus group prompts were not modified.

Then, the researcher followed these procedures to identify participants for the actual study. First, the mentor coordinator from the selected district emailed the researcher a list of
beginning teachers hired in the last five years and their assigned mentor. Next, the researcher sent an email to all beginning teachers on the list (see Appendix F), requesting that they read the consent form (see Appendix G) and a criterion survey (see Appendix A), and decide if they would like to participate in the study. The researcher also contacted the principals, mentor coordinator, and mentors of the final selected teachers participating, requesting consent and criterion surveys from them as well (see Appendices H through J). The criterion survey detailed the requirements to be eligible to participate: (a) beginning teacher in general education or special education with five or fewer years of teaching experience, and (b) year one beginning teacher currently mentored or mentored within the last five years, or (c) principal, mentor, or mentor coordinator who supports the beginning teacher. Creswell (2013) suggested the use of criterion sampling to ensure all participants met the same conditions.

Second, the researcher received the signed consent forms and scheduled private interviews, which took place at the local library on a day and time that was convenient for the researcher and participants. Third, the researcher collected data from multiple sources: interviews, observations, a focus group interview, and site documents. Creswell (2013) argued that a qualitative phenomenological study should include multiple data sources to increase trustworthiness. During private, semi-structured interviews, the researcher asked participants to describe their experiences based on prepared, open-ended questions (see Appendices K through N). Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim in a research journal (see Appendix O) stored on the researcher’s laptop, which was password-protected and backed up regularly to an external hard drive.

Fourth, the researcher observed beginning teachers in their classrooms on five different days, and observed them during three mentoring sessions, keeping notes on an observation form
Persistent observation enhanced the credibility of the study (Creswell, 2013). After each observation, the researcher recorded reflections in a research journal.

Fifth, three beginning GETs and SETs were invited to attend a focus group interview and asked to answer semi-structured prepared prompts. One beginning SET was not able to attend the interview. The session was conducted in a conference room at the local library and recorded and transcribed verbatim in a research journal. Sixth, site documents were evaluated: the district’s Mentoring Handbook and material collected from the New Teacher Orientation, which was held one week before school started.

Participants’ responses to interview questions and the focus group session were recorded using voice recording software. The researcher brought an iPhone to the interview and focus group to ensure a backup recording device was on hand should the recording software malfunction. Follow-up questions were emailed to mentors and transcribed verbatim in a research journal. Lastly, the researcher maintained a daily journal of activities and reflected on field experiences.

The Researcher’s Role

The researcher, as the human instrument, observed, collected, analyzed, and synthesized data for this qualitative phenomenological study. The researcher was not employed by the school district, did not have a working relationship with anyone in the school district, nor had a vested interest in the outcome of the study. As sole researcher, she asked questions, listened, and observed participants to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon: the impact of mentoring on K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their school and career.

Currently, the researcher is pursuing a doctorate in education and has earned an Education Specialist degree from Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia. Upon completion of
the degree, she intends to work at a local university. Then, she will have a better understanding of what it means to be a beginning teacher and the impact of mentoring on a beginning teacher. Currently, the researcher trains new hires in a corporate setting and instructs and mentors beginning teachers at her local church. All of these experiences motivated the researcher to investigate the impact of mentoring on K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their school and career.

**Data Collection**

After Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board granted permission and after receipt of written approval from the school district, the researcher collected data from multiple sources within the school district. Data collected from multiple sources provided an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and enhanced the credibility of the study. Creswell (2013) referred to multiple sources as triangulation, which is the “use of different sources, methods, and theories to provide corroborating evidence for validating the accuracy of the study” (p. 302). Triangulation enhances the trustworthiness and credibility of a qualitative phenomenological study. To achieve triangulation, the researcher gathered data from interviews, observations, a focus group interview, and site documents.

**Interviews**

The first source of data came from semi-structured interviews with participants. A semi-structured interview is defined as “a type of interview in which the interviewer asks a series of structured questions and then probes more deeply with open-ended questions to obtain additional information” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 653). The researcher interviewed principals, beginning teachers, mentors, and a mentor coordinator to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (see Appendices K through N).
Interviews with beginning teachers addressed research questions one, two, and three. Likewise, interviews with mentors and the mentor coordinator provided insight into research questions three, four, and six. Lastly, interviews with principals answered research question five.

Interviews were conducted in a conference room at the local library at an agreed upon day and time and lasted one hour. The researcher asked open-ended questions, and responses were audio recorded using voice recording software and transcribed verbatim in a research journal. The researcher had an iPhone available in the event the software malfunctioned, took notes during the interview, and recorded impressions in a research journal. Creswell (2013) suggested that “interview questions should be open-ended, designed to answer research questions, and focused on understanding the central phenomenon” (p. 163). In summary, the researcher interviewed participants to gain a better understanding of the impact of mentoring on K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their school and career.

**Beginning teachers.** To understand the impact of mentoring on K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their school and career, the challenges they face, and what supports they required, interview questions three, four, and five addressed these concerns (see Appendix K). Research suggests that beginning teachers are concerned with lack of preparation time, diverse needs of students, time constraints, immense workload, and lack of support from peers and administrators (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). To understand the type of support that beginning teachers require of peers, school administrators, and the mentoring program, interview questions six, seven, and eight addressed these concerns. To effectively support an integrated classroom, GETs and SETs require time to collaborate, set goals, differentiate instruction, and improve classroom management (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). Lastly, beginning teachers require support from veteran teachers who act as role models and pass on practices
aligned with national curriculum standards (Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008).

**Mentors.** To gain a better perspective on the effect of mentors on K-12 beginning teachers, interview questions two through four were developed (see Appendix L). Wang et al. (2008) found that mentors were perceived as effective when beginning teachers implemented content-specific pedagogy aligned with national curriculum standards. Lastly, Wang et al. found that mentoring was effective in a collaborative school environment that supported beginning teachers.

**Mentor coordinator.** To provide insight to how a district’s mentor coordinator supported beginning teachers, interview questions two through six were proposed (see Appendix M). A mentor coordinator “builds relationships with mentors and mentees and provides mentors with professional development” (Smith & Israel, 2010, p. 38). Dempsey and Carty (2009) argued that well-trained mentors provide emotional support, reduce isolation, and motivate mentees to implement well-planned pedagogy. Overall, a mentor coordinator acts as a liaison among district administrators, mentors, and beginning teachers. Their support is critical to the success of a district’s mentoring program.

**Principals.** To appreciate the methods that principals use to support beginning teachers, interview questions two through six were proposed (see Appendix N). Fantilli and McDougall (2009) found that principals supported beginning teachers by arranging for mentoring, differentiating support, and creating a lead teacher role. Principals set the overall tone for the school and provide support for the district’s mentoring program, mentors, and mentees.

**Observations**

The second source of data came from the researcher’s observation of mentor/mentee coaching sessions and beginning teachers’ classrooms. Specifically, the researcher observed
three mentor coaching sessions for every beginning teacher and recorded quotes and reflections in a research journal. Then, the researcher observed beginning teachers’ classrooms on five different days and recorded impressions in a research journal.

The researcher hoped to observe the following changes: (a) implementation of mentors’ suggestions, (b) increase in teachers’ confidence, and (c) improvement in teachers’ efficacy. Creswell (2013) argued that “observations are one of the key tools for collecting data in qualitative research. It is the act of noting a phenomenon in a field setting through the five senses” (p. 166). The researcher used an observation form (see Appendix P) to document what was observed and later transcribed impressions in the research journal. An observation form is defined as “a form used in qualitative data collection for guiding and recording data. The researcher records information from the observation on the form” (Creswell, 2013, p. 298). By observing participants first hand, the researcher hoped to gain insight to research question 1, to understand the daily challenges of beginning teachers, and research question 4, how mentors support beginning teachers.

Focus Group

The third source of data came from a focus group interview. In educational research, a focus group interview is defined as “a type of interview involving an interviewer and a group of research participants, who are free to talk with and influence each other in the process of sharing their ideas and perceptions about a defined topic” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 640). Barbour (2007) argued that a focus group interview should illuminate what participants’ think, why they think what they do, how their misconceptions arose, and what the impact was on their behavior.

Based on responses to interview questions, six beginning teachers (three GETs and three SETs) were invited to attend the focus group interview. Unfortunately, one SET was not able to
attend the interview. The interview took place in a conference room at the local library on a day and at a time that suited all participants. The researcher used voice recording software, had an iPhone handy should the software malfunction, and transcribed the interview verbatim. The focus group interview lasted one hour and participants discussed the following:

1. What are the gaps in your pre-service training?
2. Who or what prevents you from receiving mentoring support?
3. What areas of support have not been addressed by your mentor?
4. What can school administrators do to provide you with better support?
5. Describe the types of support you receive from the district mentoring program?
6. What motivates or discourages you to persist in your career?
7. What would improve your efficacy and commitment to school and career?

Fantilli and McDougall (2009) investigated the challenges and supports of beginning teachers and found that beginning teachers required the following: “Specific training in delivery of standardized teaching, classroom observation time, mentoring services, and a professional learning community” to ease transition (p. 16). The focus group interview answered research question 1, what are the challenges of beginning teachers; question 3, what obstacles prevent effective mentoring of beginning teachers; question 4, how do mentors support beginning teachers; question 5, how do school administrators support beginning teachers; and question 6, how does a district’s mentoring program and coordinator support beginning teachers.

**Site Documents**

The fourth source of data came from inspection of site documents. Site documents are “artifacts found within a specific context or setting where the group works” and provide a researcher with deeper meaning of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 95). The district’s
Mentoring Handbook and notes from the New Teacher Orientation were evaluated by the researcher, compared to the literature, and impressions recorded in a research journal. As questions arose, the researcher asked principals, the assistant district superintendent, or the mentor coordinator. Creswell (2013) posited that site documents provide objective evidence about the phenomenon and are another source that increases the study’s validity. Site documents were inspected to answer research question 4, how do mentors support beginning teachers, and research question 6, how does the district mentoring program and mentor coordinator support beginning teachers.

**Data Analysis**

To analyze the data, the researcher maintained rigor through the use of trustworthy, qualitative techniques. Lincoln and Guba (1986) argued that a qualitative researcher should obtain a “thick description” from participants that explains the phenomenon, which will enable one to make inferences after being in close proximity and observing the phenomenon first hand (p. 17). To accomplish this task, the researcher suspended personal judgment on the impact of mentoring on K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their career and school. Lincoln and Guba (1986) posited that the researcher and participants join together and learn about the experience. Creswell (2013) referred to joint learning as “bracketing” or “suspending personal understanding in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity” (p.83). To do so, the researcher focused on the experiences of participants while filtering the experiences through her worldview, which enabled her to analyze and interpret the data.

Specifically, data analysis followed the seven steps proposed by Moustakas (1994): (a) listing and grouping significant statements, (b) reducing and eliminating redundancies, (c) clustering and thematizing, (d) identifying and synthesizing themes, (e) constructing a textural
description, (f) constructing a structural description, and finally (g) constructing an overall textural-structural description of the experience. Most importantly, these steps provided a detailed framework to analyze and synthesize the data.

To organize the data, the researcher followed these steps. First, data from interviews, observations, and a focus group interview were transcribed. Second, data was then horizontalized to identify themes by highlighting significant statements. Horizontalization occurs when a researcher identifies themes or “significant statements relevant to a topic” (Creswell, 2013, p. 284).

Third, significant statements were coded and “clustered into meanings or themes and repetitive statements removed” (Creswell, 2013, p. 284). Coding is a component of data analysis and defined as “segmenting data into one or more categories” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 634). Themes, then, were placed in categories in a three-column chart (see Appendix Q).

Lastly, themes and categories were synthesized to understand the participants’ textural and structural experiences. A textural description is defined as “what was experienced” (Creswell, 2013, p. 286). In contrast, a structural description is defined as “how the phenomenon was experienced” (Creswell, 2013, p. 286). Creswell (2013) argued that “all experiences have an underlying structure (p. 82). Gall et al. (2007) proposed that structure provides an overall “meaning of relationships between elements” (p. 655). Therefore, the essence, or what it means to be a K-12 beginning teacher and the impact of mentoring on efficacy and commitment to one’s school and career, resulted in a structural description.

**Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research “strives to understand a deep structure of knowledge that comes from visiting personally with participants, spending extensive time in the field, and probing to
obtain detailed meaning” (Creswell, 2013, p. 243). In qualitative research, an inductive epistemology requires the researcher to gather data and interpret results to find a universal meaning of a phenomenon. Most importantly, a qualitative study’s results must be trustworthy. Creswell (2013) argued that trustworthiness is achieved by ensuring results are credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable.

**Credibility**

The goal of qualitative research is to determine the applicability of the study. Qualitative research is credible when it authentically summarizes the lived experiences of participants (Creswell, 2013). Credibility is achieved through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation of data, peer debriefing, and member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

First, a key feature of a phenomenological study is the prolonged engagement with participants. Prolonged engagement is defined as “lengthy and intensive contact with the phenomenon in the field to assess possible sources of distortion and identify saliencies in the situation” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 18). To achieve prolonged engagement, the study took place over several weeks and included multiple interactions with participants in their school environment.

Second, persistent observation was a component of the study. Persistent observation is defined as an “in-depth pursuit of those elements found to be especially salient through prolonged engagement” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 18). The researcher observed three mentor and mentee coaching sessions, observed participants in their classrooms on five different days, and invited three GETs and SETs to attend a focus group to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Third, triangulation of data enhanced the credibility of this qualitative study.
Triangulation of data is defined as a “researcher’s use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). To achieve triangulation, the researcher gathered data from multiple sources: interviews, observations, a focus group interview, and site documents.

Fourth, peer debriefing was a component of the study. Peer debriefing is defined as “exposing oneself to a disinterested professional peer to… develop and test the emerging design” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 19). To achieve this level of credibility, the researcher invited a colleague to audit the findings and provide feedback (see Appendix R). This colleague was qualified to audit the study because he was familiar with research protocol in his role as an adjunct professor who earned a doctorate in economics and teaches graduate students at a local college.

Fifth, member checking was an element of the study. Member checking is defined as a researcher’s “soliciting participants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). Member checking ensures that the researcher accurately reported the facts, maintained a balanced view, and documented the essence of what it means to be a K-12 beginning teacher and the impact of mentoring on efficacy and commitment to one’s school and career. After interviews, observations, and focus group data were transcribed, emailed to participants for confirmation of accuracy, and feedback emailed to the researcher (see Appendix S). Overall, credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation of data, peer debriefing, and member checking, which enhanced the rigor of this qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Transferability

Transferability was evident in this study. Transferability is defined as “the reader’s
ability to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred because of shared characteristics” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). To achieve transferability, the researcher asked participants to describe their experiences in detail and then, they were transcribed verbatim. Participants’ detailed experiences resulted in a “thick descriptive narrative,” which increased the transferability of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 19). A thick description of the phenomenon scrutinized by participants increased the potential that this study’s findings could be true for other settings.

**Dependability**

Dependability was woven throughout this study. Dependability is defined as the ability to replicate a qualitative study using the researcher’s documentation (Creswell, 2013). The researcher achieved dependability by maintaining a research journal, memoing, and asking an external auditor to evaluate the findings and confirm the interpretation and results. For this study, a research journal was the repository of daily experiences, research activities, and contact information. In addition, spontaneous memoing occurred. Memoing is defined as “ideas about an evolving theory throughout the process of coding” (Creswell, 2013, p. 89). Overall, the researcher maintained an audit trail so that future researchers could replicate the study. The use of a research journal, external audit, and memoing ensured that the content and context were accurately represented and enhanced the dependability of the findings.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability was a key component of this qualitative study. Confirmability is defined as “taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants to that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). The researcher achieved confirmability through use of direct quotes and member checking. Furthermore, the
researcher maintained an audit trail, requested an external audit of the data and findings, and collected data from multiple sources to gain an in-depth understanding the experiences of K-12 beginning teachers and how mentoring impacted their efficacy and commitment to their school and career. Creswell (2013) encouraged researchers to follow their detailed research plan so that findings would be credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations of anonymity, electronic filing, and secure data storage were important to this study. Potential participants were emailed a criterion survey and consent form and assured that their identity would remain anonymous. Participants were then informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The participating school district, individual schools, and educators were known only to the researcher and the final report contained participant pseudonyms.

To ensure protection of data, electronic files were maintained on a password-protected laptop, which was backed up regularly to an encrypted external hard drive. Audio files were stored on a password-protected computer. A list of pseudonyms assigned to participants was kept in a separate password-protected file. Lastly, consent forms, research journal, notes, and diagrams were kept confidential and stored securely in a locked file cabinet, which was only accessible to the researcher.

After three years, research data will be deleted from electronic storage. Interview transcripts, research journal, diagrams, and notes will be shredded. The master list of participant names and matching pseudonym was locked in a file cabinet and destroyed after all data were analyzed.
Summary

Chapter Three described the methodology for this comparative phenomenological study. Specifically, the design, research questions, researcher’s role, participants, setting, and procedures were discussed. The researcher, then, described data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four will provide a detailed analysis of the findings to understand the experiences of nine beginning teachers who received support from their mentors, mentor coordinator, principals, and staff. The chapter will conclude with the essence of the phenomenon.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of Chapter Four is to present the findings based on rigorous data analysis for this comparative phenomenological study, which explored the impact of mentoring on K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to teaching, and why beginning teachers in special education received less mentoring than their counterparts in general education. This qualitative phenomenological study compared the experiences of five beginning teachers in general education with four beginning teachers in special education, factors within the school (e.g. principal, mentor, and mentor coordinator), and characteristics of the teaching assignment. An introduction to each participant is provided along with a synthesized analysis from the participants’ perspective, which is arranged thematically and includes participants’ significant statements. Lastly, the central research question and the six sub-questions were answered in detail based on seven steps proposed by Moustakas (1994).

The central research question that guided the study was: what are the experiences of K-12 beginning teachers who receive mentoring? Participants were selected using a criterion sampling strategy that included selecting (a) a beginning teacher with five or fewer years of experience, (b) or a year one teacher currently mentored, or teachers mentored within the last five years, and (c) of those teachers, those teach full or part time in the chosen school district, or (d) a mentor, principal, or mentor coordinator who provides support to beginning teachers. Data were collected and analyzed, which resulted in a rich description of participants’ perceptions and experiences of the phenomenon. Additionally, triangulation was achieved through gathering data from interviews, observations, focus group, and site documents, which included the district’s Mentor Handbook and notes from the New Teacher Orientation Day. Lastly, the results
of the study were presented thematically from the participants’ perspective and answered the following central research question and six sub-questions:

RQ1: What are the experiences of K-12 beginning teachers who receive mentoring?

RQ2: What are the challenges of K-12 beginning teachers and strategies used to overcome challenges?

RQ3: What are the perceptions of beginning teachers of general education (GETs) about beginning teachers of special education and vice versa?

RQ4: What obstacles prevent effective mentoring of beginning teachers?

RQ5: How do mentors support beginning teachers?

RQ6: How do school administrators support beginning teachers?

RQ7: How does a district mentoring program and mentor coordinator support beginning teachers?

**Participants**

Prior to collecting data, the researcher received approval from Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board (see Appendix B) and from the assistant superintendent at the research site (see Appendix D). Then, the researcher sent an email to the mentor coordinator and requested a list of potential beginning teachers with five or fewer years of experience and their assigned mentors. Next, the researcher sent an email to 102 beginning teachers who were hired by the school district during the past five years (Appendix F) and included both a consent form (Appendix G) and a criterion survey (Appendix A). Nine beginning teachers (five GETs and four SETs) met selection parameters and agreed to participate in the study. After these beginning teachers agreed to participate, the researcher sent an email to their mentors, principals, and mentor coordinator and invited them to participate in the study as well, and to return consent
forms, indicating interest in participation (see Appendices H through J).

Data were collected from 22 Caucasian participants (nine teachers, eight mentors, four principals, and mentor coordinator) at a suburban class school district in the north eastern part of the United States. During the one-on-one interview, a paper copy of the consent form was signed and collected from participants who did not return it electronically. All 22 participants agreed to be interviewed and audio-recorded. Participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Of the 22 participants, the mentor coordinator had more than 10 years of experience as the district mentor coordinator and 21 years of teaching experience. He announced his retirement at the end of the school year and was training his successor. Nine beginning teachers (five GETs and four SETs) with five or fewer years of experience volunteered to participate in the study, of which three were males and six were females who averaged 28 years of age, with the exception of one female who was in her early fifties and launched a second career this year in education. Eight mentors consented to participate, of which one was male and seven were females. One mentor transferred to another school district, leaving one second year teacher without a mentor. Lastly, four principals from one high school, two elementary schools, and one middle school consented to participate, of which one was male and three were females.

Participants were assigned pseudonyms in alphabetical order from A – Z.

**Beginning Teachers**

**Aaden.** Aaden is a Caucasian male teacher in his mid-thirties. Recently, he earned a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and teaches high school math at his alma mater. Aaden assimilated easily into the school’s culture because the principal and many of the teachers he had seventeen years ago are still employed at the school. Nevertheless, as a first year GET, Aaden
was surprised at the volume of work, and he understands that time management is crucial to be a successful teacher. Aaden described his experience this way:

I recall observing teachers in my K-12 journey who were calm, at ease, and joyful, while other teachers were angry, overwhelmed, and took out their frustrations on students. I have the opportunity to shape and mold the minds of our future generation for 180 days a year and 42 minutes per class per day. Teachers who love to convey concepts will enjoy the journey and inspire students to learn, as they model their love for knowledge before students. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

**Becca.** Becca is a Caucasian female teacher in her late twenties. She earned a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education and was working on her graduate degree in English. She was enrolled in two classes to finish to her degree and receive a professional license. As a fifth year kindergarten GET, Becca felt like a first year teacher because she transferred this fall into the school district. Becca described her experience this way: “Transitioning is like being a first year teacher, starting over, learning the routines and rules of a new school, um, making sure you are following all of the guidelines correctly” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

**Candice.** Candice is a Caucasian female in her early fifties who held a degree in law but who reported that working in a law firm left her unfulfilled. She was disillusioned with preparing briefs and defending positions, some of which were against her beliefs. So Candice started a second career in education. Although Candice received no formal pedagogical training, she passed the teacher proficiency exam in foreign language with ease. Thus, the school district granted her a provisional license to teach high school French Level II. Most importantly, Candice was relying on her mentor to provide pedagogical training so she would be successful in
the classroom. Candice’s mentor had a vested interest in her training. Poor training would result in unprepared French Level III students. Candice viewed her first year teaching experience this way:

Teaching is a positive endeavor and an opportunity to contribute to society and to the next generation, um, and hopefully inspire my students with the help of foreign language, to understand how it will enhance their lives, their career, and provide a greater understanding of society. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

**Dalton.** Dalton is a Caucasian male in his late twenties who had recently completed his master’s degree. As a middle school fifth year GET, Dalton was teaching music and chorus. His primary instrument was piano and secondary instrument was voice. His first four years of teaching were at an inner city school, which was taken over by state regulators. This unsettling experience motivated him to seek employment elsewhere. As a first year suburban teacher, Dalton was amazed how engaged students were at this middle school and how unengaged they were at the inner city school. Dalton stated his perspective this way:

I believe high engagement is due to suburban parents supporting their kids academically and exposing them to fine arts. This is not the case with students in the inner city. They have had little or no exposure to fine arts. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

**Edmund.** Edmund is a Caucasian male in his mid-twenties who expected to finish his master’s degree in June and hoped to be awarded a professional license. As a third year GET, Edmund was teaching 6th grade. He brought passion and energy to the classroom. His initial teaching experience allowed him to value a classroom management plan. Edmund taught at a school filled with students 16 years of age and older who made wrong choices but desired to earn
a high school equivalency diploma. These troubled students brought a lot of pain to the classroom and were easily agitated and aggressive. To cope with the stressful learning environment, Edmund chose to listen to students describe their learning needs and helped them learn so they could start their vocational trade training. As he reflected, Edmund described his experience and said:

There is a lot of stuff that I ignore that gives kids a sense of freedom. I’m also one of the fastest to come down on students that are being aggressive. In my former school, a student came into my room and pulled a chair over another student’s head. So, that experience has stayed with me. I allow students freedom to choose the right thing and I commend those that do the right thing. If anyone is being mistreated, I focus on it immediately. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Faith. Faith is a Caucasian female in her late twenties. She is a second year SET employed at the middle school as a speech and language pathologist. As a first year teacher in this particular district, Faith compared this school with her previous school, which was fresh in her mind. She summed up her experience this way:

It really is like night and day in this district as compared to my last district. In this district, there is consistency of administrators. At my previous school, they were on their third principal in five years and hired a third director of special services in eight years. My mentor was a French teacher who never worked with an IEP and could not answer my questions. I did not feel any support there. In this school, I have a mentor who is a speech and language pathologist. Everyone is so supportive and wants to help. They are so kind and really want you to succeed. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)
**Gwen.** Gwen is a Caucasian female in her late twenties, with a master’s degree in severe special education. As a third year SET, Gwen teaches life skills and pre-vocational academics in a self-contained classroom and receives academic support from four paraprofessionals (three females and one male) on a daily basis. Gwen reflected on her experience and said, “Starting out has been hard but very rewarding, um, to be able to push kids to their independence, and, um, hold them to higher expectations than they have been expected to accomplish in the past” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). As a second year teacher in the school district, Gwen mentioned that she and her students feel very welcome. In her previous inner city school, Gwen’s classroom was in a dark hallway in the back corner of the school, whereas in this school, her classroom is situated in the main hallway. She described her experience this way:

> You know, the principal will wait in the morning to say hi to my kids. Um, other students will stop by and ask to take my kids to lunch and sit with their friends. We are very much a part of this school. The environment here is by far the best, um, with a very supportive administration. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

**Haley.** Haley is a Caucasian female in her mid-twenties, with a master’s degree in special education. She was employed at the elementary school as an occupational therapist. As a first year SET, Haley felt frustrated and said emphatically, “I do not know what needs to be done, but find out along the way, which makes it a little difficult” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). To cope with her frustration, Haley said, “I just try to listen to my staff and the kids and make things as simple as possible so they don’t get frustrated with me and I don’t get frustrated with them” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). She
summed up her first two months as a beginning SET and said, “I’m alive” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

**Isabella.** Isabella is a Caucasian female in her late twenties and was finishing her second master’s degree in special education. She was employed at the elementary school as an occupational therapist. Isabella split her time between the town’s preschool and elementary school. As a first year SET, Isabella was assimilating into the culture of the school and learning the ropes. She felt connected to the school, welcomed by teachers and administration, and described her perspective:

> I just love the school and the people. I was treated like family from the day I started and still feel that way. Um, every time I walk into the building, administrators are asking me, ‘How’s your day, is there anything we can do?’ They are willing to help me with any questions I have whether it is the printer not working, where to find a document, or who to send this or that to. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

**Mentors**

**Jacquelyn.** Jacquelyn is a Caucasian female in her early forties and holds an undergraduate degree in math. After twenty plus years of teaching high school math as a GET at her alma mater, Jacquelyn claimed that she is as enthusiastic about math today as the day she was hired, but much wiser. She was selected as the successor to the mentor coordinator who is retiring at the end of the school year. Jacquelyn is Aaden’s mentor and had him as a math student seventeen years ago, which made her feel like a dinosaur. Her love for math inspired Aaden to become a math teacher. Most of all, Jacquelyn appreciated the fact that her desk and Aaden’s desk are in the same classroom, which allows them to have the same planning time each day. Jacquelyn summed up her experience in the following manner:
I feel lucky to be able to share my knowledge with someone new to the profession. I want to make that person feel comfortable and tell them right up front that I am not evaluating them. I am here to guide them, answer questions, and try to make the transition as easy as possible. So it’s nice to be able to help them develop professionally as educators, learn the different ways we do things, and work through the mundane pieces of the job. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

**Kelsey.** Kelsey is a Caucasian female in her early thirties, with a master’s degree in early childhood education. She is in her 10th year of teaching kindergarten. Kelsey is Becca’s mentor. She found out after school started that she was Becca’s mentor, which was not ideal. They did not have time to bond before school started. To overcome this issue, Kelsey and Becca arrive at school one hour before school starts so they have time to plan, interact, and prepare for the day. Kelsey always wanted to be a mentor and recalled her own experience as a first year teacher:

I had a wonderful mentor. I just remember thinking, like, I wouldn’t have been able to survive the year probably, um, without having that mentor, um, just to, ya know, have emotional support, um, to bounce ideas off her, and to have them validated. So for me, I wanted to be able to give the experience I received back to somebody else. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

**Lindsey.** Lindsey is a Caucasian female in her late fifties, with a master’s degree. She teaches French Levels III and IV at the high school. Lindsey embraces her craft by traveling to France every summer. Lindsey is Candice’s mentor. She has a tall order to mentor a first year teacher who is starting a second career in education with no background in education. Regrettably, Candice has multiple gaps in her pedagogical knowledge, which has tried Lindsey’s patience and was causing tension in the relationship. Nonetheless, Lindsey was grateful to be
able to “have a hand in helping to grow another person’s craft. It is important to me to have a hand in helping to create a pedagogically- strong member of my department” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Like Kelsey’s experience, Lindsey found out after school started that she was Candice’s mentor, which started the relationship off on the wrong foot. As a result, they did not have sufficient time to get acquainted, bond, and answer Candice’s questions before school started.

**Marshall.** Marshall is a Caucasian male in his mid-thirties. He had fourteen years of experience teaching band to middle school students, teaching private lessons after school, and has had a thriving disc jockey business. Marshall’s energy seemed endless all the while raising twin girls. He has been respected by school administrators and has had a successful band program. To achieve music department goals, he has networked with power brokers and has learned how to address administrators appropriately. As Dalton’s mentor, Marshall has maintained an enthusiastic attitude, because he wanted a better experience for Dalton than he had in his early years of teaching. He preferred more coaching and guidance and desired that his mentor be located in the same building. While at the middle school, Marshall made an impression on the researcher’s son. He learned to play guitar and write music. Indeed, Marshall’s love for music was contagious. Marshall said, “I have no idea how many students’ lives have been changed by participating in my band program” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

**Natalie.** Natalie is a Caucasian female in her mid-forties and works at the middle school. As an experienced speech and language pathologist, she is Faith’s mentor. Natalie has a strong desire to nurture and guide her mentee. She is a strong proponent of observing and modeling appropriate behavior. Natalie stated emphatically that a speech and language pathologist is not
the teacher of record but consults with the classroom teacher to improve students’ skills. She believes her role is “to make Faith feel very comfortable, explain the process, and work together to develop student individualized programs so that we can meet their learning needs” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Due to an increase in the level of bureaucracy, Natalie is frustrated with an insufficient amount of time to focus on students’ needs and said candidly:

It seems that it’s not about the student anymore. It’s actually about paperwork, filling out Medicaid forms, writing out plans, going to meetings, consulting with classroom teachers, and writing out our professional development plans, which takes a great deal of time. In addition, um, we have to create purchase orders and order materials. We have lost our focus on educating students. So, it’s just an endless task of trying to figure out how to effectively service students. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Natalie summed up her thoughts and said, “I would like to change the amount of paperwork that teachers have to do and eliminate weekly staff meetings. Then, we would have a few more hours in the day to meet the needs of students” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

Octavia. Octavia is a Caucasian female in her late fifties who works at the high school. She has earned a master’s degree in moderate special education and English. As an experienced SET, she is Gwen’s mentor. Octavia reflected on her experience as a mentor and said, “I get to spend a year with a teacher and help her understand, um, what needs to be done within the school and in the district, um, as far as grades, record keeping, lesson planning, and other responsibilities” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Octavia revealed
that her mentee, Gwen, assumed responsibility for her former classroom. For the past three
years, Octavia taught life skills and pre-vocational academics in a self-contained classroom.
Because Octavia was familiar with the students and their individualized programs, she helped
Gwen set up her room and stopped by her classroom to see how she was doing. Octavia
reflected on her experience and said:

I have been a mentor twice and understand what it is like to work in those programs. I’m
really the only one in the building that completely gets the day-to-day existence. So, I am
able to provide a level of support that may not be gotten from another mentor. It’s just a
way to build, you know, trust with another colleague and have another level of support in
the building that you might not have with another teacher. (Personal communication with
participant, October, 2015)

**Paige.** Paige is a Caucasian female in her late sixties and holds two masters degrees, one
in physical therapy and the other in occupational therapy. She was working at the elementary
school as an occupational therapist and was Haley’s mentor. Paige enjoys the opportunity to
mentor young occupational therapists. Her goal was to make a personal connection and share
personal information with her mentees. Paige made the following observation:

I show young occupational therapists, um, what I have learned from doing the job, which
is very challenging. I go out of my way to show them around, introduce them to people,
and share information from my own packet to get them up and running. (Personal
communication with participant, October, 2015)

Paige summed up her three years of mentoring and proudly declared, “We do a pretty good job
of mentoring new staffers. We work closely together. I feel like we do a pretty good job of, um,
working on team goals, and taking care of each other” (Personal communication with participant,
October, 2015).

**Quella.** Quella is a Caucasian female in her mid-forties with a degree in special education. She has been an elementary school SET for twenty years. Quella is Isabella’s mentor. She stressed that new SETs must learn applied behavior analysis teaching methodology. Quella views this methodology as an essential tool to be a successful SET. As a proponent of reciprocal learning, Quella said, “We value new teachers’ suggestions and try to implement them. So, I learn from them too. In response, I share ideas, coach, train, and collaborate, which enhances the learning experience” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

Quella and Isabella co-teach in the same classroom, which is an ideal arrangement, because they observe and interact in the moment and have an opportunity to reflect together on the day’s experiences.

**Principals**

**Ryan.** Ryan is a Caucasian male in his mid-fifties and the principal of the high school. This year is his eighth year of service. As a former classroom teacher, Ryan knew first-hand the skills required to deliver good instruction. Ryan stressed the importance of selecting a mentor who models good instruction and flawless transitions. As principal, he has observed good instruction and stated, “Classrooms should be shared with other teachers. I think seeing what everybody is doing is important” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

To properly match a new teacher with a mentor, Ryan uses specific criteria. At a minimum, the mentor and new teacher must teach the same content or specialty. Furthermore, a mentor must have at least three years of experience, similar personality, and desire to nurture the new teacher for at least two years. Most importantly, Ryan said, “I want someone who really believes in our school culture and can share it with the new teacher” (Personal communication
Sabrina. Sabrina is a Caucasian female in her late fifties and has been the principal of one of three elementary schools in the district for fourteen years. She was proud of the fact that she has hired all but two teachers who are currently employed at the elementary school and built a strong team that has stuck by her. Sabrina values a familial atmosphere and a high level of comradery among teachers. To demonstrate that she genuinely cared about her teachers, Sabrina touched base with almost every teacher every day and asked if there is anything they needed or what else she could do to support them. Her maternal ways will be missed next year. Sabrina had planned to retire at the end of the year. Her teachers will have to bond with another administrator. As she reflected on her fourteen years as principal, Sabrina said:

We support our teachers in this district. I think that our retention is a testament to that. Um, I think that it’s not just a matter of mentoring teachers. It’s mentoring new administrators. Mentoring happens across the board. I had a mentor when I got here, so it’s a philosophy that we believe in. I think it works. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Tabitha. Tabitha is a Caucasian female in her early forties and was the principal of the second elementary school in the district. She appreciated the support new teachers received from school administrators and the district mentoring program. Tabitha made it her business to match new teachers with mentors who have at least three years of experience and have a similar position. Furthermore, she made certain that teachers have the necessary supplies to enhance learning. Lastly, Tabitha valued the relationship that mentors and mentees enjoy. As a result, she strongly encouraged her pairs to attend the district’s monthly training meeting together so
they would have similar experiences and an opportunity to reflect and apply what they have learned to their jobs.

**Udele.** Udele is a Caucasian female in her mid-fifties and was the principal of the middle school. She has been in her position for fifteen years. Her school was unique in that it was the town’s former high school. Thus, students take the core curriculum along with industrial arts and home economics, which is very popular.

Udele was very sensitive to the needs of beginning teachers and mentors. To the best of her ability, Udele matched a beginning teacher with a mentor in the same grade and content area. She said, “I try to find someone, that, um, you know, is going to have the time, um, the desire, to mentor and, um, support the beginning teacher” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Udele recalled attending a meeting at the Junior High for the purpose of selecting mentors for future beginning teachers, which made a lasting impression on her and remarked:

Forty teachers shared their first and second year experiences and what stressed them the most: where is the bathroom, where is the cafeteria, what time am I supposed to be here, and where do I go to find something. Survival trumped questions about the curriculum.

(Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Because Udele never forgot that experience, she resolved to “get to know beginning teachers and get them in the building, ah, ya know, before they actually start to teach” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

**Mentor Coordinator**

**Vance.** Vance is a Caucasian male in his early sixties with a master’s degree in chemistry and biology. He has been the high school chemistry teacher for 21 years. In addition
to his GET responsibility, Vance was the district mentor coordinator and implemented district mentoring initiatives. During his tenure, Vance created the Mentoring Handbook and launched the New Teacher Orientation Day, which takes place one week before school starts. Vance felt quite strongly that “teachers should be 30 years old before they enter the classroom. They enter the classroom wiser and more mature from wisdom gained from practical experience” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Vance did just that. He worked at a chemical company before entering the classroom. Thus, Vance integrated practical examples gleaned from his work experience into chemistry lessons to make the content more real for students.

As mentor coordinator, Vance facilitated the monthly training meetings, found out what was and was not working well for beginning teachers, and collaborated with attendees to address problems of practice. Vance’s only regret was that mentees did not meet more frequently. With the hand off of his role to Jacquelyn, his successor, Vance hoped that the current mentoring program and New Teacher Orientation Day would evolve over time. He envisioned increased support for mentors and advocated for content and specialty mentors who supported multiple teachers, which would free up many veteran teachers and make the program more efficient. Thus, the district’s mentoring program would morph into one mentor supporting many mentees versus one mentor supporting one mentee. Time will reveal what changes will be made to the mentoring program.

**Results**

Results were presented thematically from participants’ perspective. Then, research questions were answered sequentially. Lastly, the textural and structural descriptions and essence of the experience were described.
Themes

After collecting data from 22 participants, themes were identified across all data sets, which included interviews, observations, a focus group, and site documents. A more detailed analysis of the data collection methodology is discussed in Chapter Three. Data were transcribed and reviewed for accuracy. The seven steps proposed by Moustakas (1994) were followed to analyze the data. The first step was disconnection from the researcher’s preconceived meaning of the phenomenon, which is known in the literature as epoche (Moustakas, 1994). The data determined the meaning of the experience. Second, the researcher identified significant statements across all data sets and documented the range of participants’ experiences in relationship to the phenomenon. From there, data was synthesized and 60 invariant horizons emerged, which were unique qualities of participants’ experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Third, the researcher identified nonrepetitive statements commonly referred to as horizons or meaning units (Moustakas, 1994). Fourth, the researcher clustered horizons into 14 themes, which removed irrelevant and overlapping statements. Table 1 presents the horizons of open-codes, number of times the open-code appeared across all data sets, and three themes that emerged from synthesized data.

Throughout the process, open-codes were revised as significant statements were reexamined for clusters of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Smaller codes were combined and rolled up into larger categories (Appendix Q). In aggregate, three themes emerged from analysis regarding the experiences and perceptions of GETs and SETs and the impact of mentoring on their efficacy and commitment to their career and school: (a) Beginning teachers require molding and shaping to impact school culture, (b) Beginning teachers imitate to replicate the school culture, and (c) A mindset of support permeates the school culture. The following section
Table 1

*Horizons of Emerging Themes – Beginning Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open-Code</th>
<th>Enumeration of open-code appearance across data sets</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of beginning teachers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Beginning teachers require molding and shaping to impact the school culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap in preservice training</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of beginning teachers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences in perception of GETs vs SETs and vice versa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to overcome beginning teacher challenges</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of mentor-mentee reciprocal relationship</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Beginning teachers imitate to replicate the school culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of the mentoring process</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the mentor coordinator</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of mentors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for mentor coordinator</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning teachers’ perceptions of support received from principal</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>A mindset of support permeates the school culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals’ perception of support given to beginning teachers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges faced by principals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for principals</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

provides an in-depth analysis of the three emerging themes and related subthemes.

**Beginning Teachers Require Molding and Shaping to Impact the School Culture**

This was the first theme that emerged and provided answers to the central research question and research questions one and two. Five distinct sub-themes were identified within the main theme: (a) Beginning teacher characteristics, (b) Gaps in preservice training, (c) Challenges of beginning teachers, (d) Differences in perception of GETs versus SETs and vice versa, and (e) Strategies to overcome challenges. When beginning teachers enter the classroom, they possess a variety of experiences, skills, and abilities. To become competent at their craft, beginning teachers require molding and shaping to persist in their career and impact their school
Beginning teacher characteristics. Beginning teachers bring a variety of experiences and skills to the classroom. Some teachers are more prepared physically, emotionally, and mentally than others and have preconceived notions of what life will be like when they enter the classroom. When asked to reflect on their experiences, beginning GET and SET participants mentioned that passion, energy, creative ideas, and enthusiasm were essential to influence students while remaining humble and learning from mistakes. GET participants, Dalton and Edmund, felt they brought a great deal of passion, energy, and creative ideas to the classroom but perceived that their principal did not expect much from them. For example, Dalton suggested to his principal they start a chorus at the middle school. His principal did not believe that students would come to school one hour early for chorus. On launch day, 100 students showed up for the first practice (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). As a fifth year GET participant, Becca said, “I want to grow, learn from my mistakes, and make every year better” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Aaden, a first year teacher, was proud of the fact that he had the “opportunity to shape and mold the minds of future generations” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

SET participants valued a positive attitude, support of the classroom teacher, and advocacy for students. They believed these qualities prevented burnout. Isabella, a first year SET said, “I realized that working with students with special needs requires a special instructor who is patient, empathetic, kind, and loves interacting with students with learning disabilities” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). While observing Isabella’s instruction of a fourth grade male student with Down syndrome, the researcher was moved by her student’s struggle to respond to instruction. Isabella’s patient instruction brought tears to the
researcher’s eyes, and she wanted to reach across the table, give him a hug, and tell him that she would be rooting for him. She envisioned him all grown up. Maybe he would not achieve what other students might achieve academically, but he will excel in other ways.

K-12 students are naive and immature, which empowers teachers to advocate for their learning needs. One SET participant said emphatically, “I am the voice of the students” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Gwen, a SET participant, felt that exhaustion and burnout were real possibilities but hard work and determination would pay off. She summarized her thoughts and disclosed:

I think I’m built for this job, mentor or not. I will last. Most nights I’m here till 5 p.m. and I don’t leave until 7 p.m. It feels like your soul is left at work. I go home and it’s like now, what do I do with my life. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

**Gaps in preservice training.** Some beginning teachers entered the classroom with gaps in their knowledge. One GET participant, Dalton, completed an undergraduate degree in music, which prevented him from taking a sufficient number of courses in education. Another GET participant, Candice, chose to start a second career in education and entered the classroom with a gap in her knowledge. During her one-on-one interview, Candice disclosed:

I lack pedagogical training. I know the content but not how to deliver it. I do not know the best way to teach students to master a foreign language. My mentor, Lindsey, and I sit down and parse out lesson plans. So, I am relying on her to fill the gaps in my knowledge. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

After entering the classroom, other beginning GETs and SETs found they lacked courses in classroom management and differentiated instruction. Isabella, for example, transferred from a
GET position to an SET position at the elementary school. She believed, “The biggest gap is differentiation of instruction for a wide range of diverse student needs” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). The myriad of gaps in preservice training can be shored up with experience, professional development courses, or formal training in education. Nonetheless, beginning teachers face a multitude of challenges upon entry the classroom.

**Challenges of beginning teachers.** Beginning teachers face a host of challenges. At first glance, the challenges seem overwhelming and require coping skills and support from a mentor and principal. Numerically, this sub-theme resulted in the second highest open-code value and was found 33 times across all data sets. Thus, challenges of beginning teachers require a great deal of time and attention from mentors and principals.

During one-on-one interviews and the focus group interview, GET and SET participants disclosed that they deal with workplace and emotional challenges. As beginning teachers, some participants felt alone, isolated, and nervous that they would make a mistake even though they have the support of a mentor and principal. Faith, an SET participant and second year teacher, disclosed the following sentiment:

I am always just nervous that I will miss something, miss a deadline on testing, miss a meeting, or do something wrong. I feel that I am constantly nervous that I am going to mess something up. As that starts to diminish, my efficacy will increase. So, time and becoming more comfortable will improve my confidence. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Within this context, there are a host of other challenges that beginning teachers struggle to overcome. GET and SET participants agreed that transfer of college coursework to their current workplace, time management, volume of work, work-life balance, and developing
collegial relationships were difficult to manage. During the focus group interview, there was an intense discussion among three GETs and two SET participants related to time management. Although GET participants have a preparation time, those beginning teachers who attend graduate school would like a second preparation period. For those learning their craft and enrolled in grad school, time was in short supply. Their time was split between work, graduate school, and family. Two GET participants, Edmund and Becca, and one SET participant, Isabella, were finishing their master’s degrees and concurred that they felt exhausted. During the focus group interview, Edmund divulged his experience and said:

On Monday night, I get home from grad school, after leaving everything on my desk at school, and put a can of soup on the stove. I turn on the TV and am sleeping by 8 p.m. That is my life. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

As a whole, SET participants stated during private interviews and the focus group interview that they have no preparation period and lack common planning time with their GET co-teacher. Furthermore, SET participants mentioned that there was an insufficient amount of time to prepare Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). During the focus group session, Isabella agreed with Edmund and revealed:

I have grad school on Tuesday night and am in bed by 8 p.m. I do not eat dinner. I go right to bed. I know we are salaried and expected to do stuff on our own time. For example, my mentor and I spent the first three weekends, all day Saturday and Sunday, putting together student programs. At some point, what is expected of us and not done because you physically can’t get to it within the hours you are at school reflects negatively on you. The hours that you put in, especially as a new teacher are exhausting. Um, I am very thankful that my first year as a teacher is prior to having kids. I think to
myself that something would have to give. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

GET and SET participants revealed other challenges they faced such as learning the school’s and district’s rules and regulations, creating tests, developing a grading policy, administering classroom management, and learning the online system. These topics did not result in a heated discussion during one-on-one interviews or the focus group session. In the end, participants were counting on their mentors and principals for support to resolve these challenges.

**Differences in perception: GET versus SET and vice versa.** There were strong feelings disclosed during one-on-one interviews and the focus group regarding four differences in perceived experiences of GET participants versus SET participants. First, GET participants had a preparation period, whereas SET participants did not have a preparation period. Edmund, as a third year GET, had a preparation period and wanted his principal to grant him a second preparation period. During the focus group interview, several participants voiced their opinions regarding differences in working conditions. Edmund said definitively, “We do not get enough time to adequately prepare. It is taking a major toll on me socially and emotionally. It really kills your motivation” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

Other members of the focus group voiced their experiences. Isabella, as a first year SET, chimed in and said, “As special education teachers, we do not have prep time” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Candice, a first year GET said, “When I hear that special education teachers do not have a prep period, oh my, I need my prep time. I think it is not a good thing” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Lack of preparation time for SETs was one of three differences in GET’s versus SET’s working
conditions.

The second difference was that GETs co-teaching with SETs have no co-planning time. During the one-on-one interview, Faith, a second year speech and language pathologist, stated, “I am co-teaching right now. I think the hardest part is finding the time to have common planning time, which we really don’t have” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Other work-related priorities were scheduled in lieu of co-planning time.

The third difference was that GET participants interacted with their mentors during the school day, whereas SET participants interacted with their mentors before or after school, unless an SET mentor and mentee were co-teaching. Aaden, a first year GET, and his mentor, Jacquelyn, had a desk in the same classroom and shared the same preparation period, which enabled them to interact every day. In contrast, Faith, a second year SET, reported during her one-on-one interview:

Although we share the same office, there are too many other things to do such as write a report, test a student, or develop a lesson plan. Um, so, it helps that we carve out specific time to sit with my mentor and talk about things I can work on. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Gwen, a third year SET, had a different experience. Although Gwen’s mentor, Octavia taught in her classroom for three years, Gwen perceived that Octavia was an unengaged and unsupportive mentor. During her one-on-one interview, Gwen said transparently, “When I needed help, Octavia would say, ‘Oh it’s no big deal’ and down played my question. Um, so, I did not feel supported but other teachers stepped up and assisted me. My mentor failed me” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

In contrast, Isabella, a first year SET, revealed that her mentor was not accessible to her
during working hours. During the focus group session, Isabella said, “I can ask my mentor questions before school and after school, on my own time. I do not have the privilege of co-teaching with my mentor. Even so, there is no structured time to interact throughout the day” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

The last difference was GET substitutes were easier to place in the classroom than in SET classrooms. During the focus group interview, Isabella observed, “The school district is struggling to get qualified substitutes so that teachers can attend necessary training.” Gwen, a third year SET, revealed during her one-on-one interview, “I can only leave the classroom when a service provider comes in” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). GET participants did not perceive that the district had a difficult time placing substitutes in their classrooms.

**Strategies to overcome challenges.** GETs and SETs use various coping strategies to overcome challenges. Numerically, this sub-theme returned the third highest open-code value and was found 27 times in the data. Coping with challenges and employing strategies are as unique as the beginning GET or SET. Across all data sets, GET and SET participants agreed that seeking advice from mentor and colleagues through observations and feedback and attending professional development courses were effective strategies to overcoming challenges in their classrooms. Specifically, GET participants set achievable goals, stayed organized, used tips on the Internet to solve problems of practice, and developed technological applications to deliver instruction. These strategies were proposed within the context of listening to students, remaining fair, offering praise, showing respect, displaying patience, and employing humor at the appropriate time.

In contrast, SET participants found that listening to their paraprofessionals and students,
controlling emotions, and exercising regularly were effective strategies to overcoming challenges in the classroom. These strategies were proposed within the context of maintaining a positive attitude. Overall, GET and SET participants found these strategies were helpful when they were implemented at the right time and in the right circumstances.

**Beginning Teachers Imitate to Replicate the School Culture**

This was the second theme that emerged and provided answers to research questions three, four, and six. Five distinct sub-themes were identified within the main theme: (a) Characteristics of the mentor-mentee reciprocal relationship, (b) Characteristics of mentors, (c) Challenges of the mentoring process, (d) Role of the mentor coordinator, and (e) Suggestions for mentor coordinator to consider, which was an unexpected theme.

**Characteristics of the mentor-mentee reciprocal relationship.** Throughout the reciprocal relationship, mentees were learning from mentors and mentors were learning from mentees. To become competent at their craft, beginning teachers require mentoring early in their career. Numerically, this sub-theme returned the highest open-code value and was found 43 times in the data. Within this section, four smaller themes emerged: (a) Reciprocal learning, (b) Proximity of mentor to mentee, (c) Emotional wellness, and (d) Collaboration. Regarding reciprocal learning, mentors and mentees went into each other’s classrooms and observed delivery of instruction with the goal of improving technique and demonstrating flawless transitions. Mentors and mentees were learning from each other as well as from other veteran teachers. Ryan, principal of the high school, felt strongly and declared:

> It is important that new teachers go into their mentor’s classroom and just observe them.
> Ah, having new teachers going into other teacher’s classrooms who are not in the same discipline is important. I might send a foreign language teacher to a math teacher’s
classroom. I might do the opposite and send a math teacher to a foreign language teacher’s classroom. New teachers need to see those flawless transitions in any classroom. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Mentors and mentees shared the same office or were in close proximity to each other. During mentor-mentee coaching sessions, the researcher observed Aaden, mentee, and his mentor, Jacquelyn, interacting in their shared space. Similarly, I observed Faith, mentee, and her mentor, Natalie, interacting in their shared space. In contrast, Dalton, mentee, and his mentor, Marshall, have adjacent offices. Dalton was thrilled with his work space and said:

The strategy is perfect. I mean, Marshall’s office is right next to mine. He’s right there and in the same building. Ah, we can bounce ideas off each other constantly. Whatever I need to know, he is right there. I don’t think I could have it any better. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Emotional wellness is essential to a beginning teacher’s survival in the early years of teaching. The health of the mentor-mentee relationship predicts the level of satisfaction for the pair. Disillusionment can easily creep in if the relationship is not going well. Some mentors are highly engaged in supporting their mentees, while others are not engaged at all.

GET and SET participants agreed that engaged mentors helped them transition from college to the workplace, texted, called, and checked on them regularly. Their mentors assisted them with lesson planning during school and outside of work, shared materials and ideas, helped set up the classroom, and answered questions. When things were not going well, mentees reported that their mentors provided advice. During his one-on-one interview, Aaden, GET participant, said, “This is a difficult job that would be much harder without a good mentor to lean on for advice and support” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). During
her one-on-one interview, Becca disclosed:

> My mentor, Kelsey, texts me outside of work and asks, like, how I’m feeling or she’ll make a phone call to me just to make me feel good, or just to see how work went that day. She’s just making sure that I’m all set every day, and I know the routines that might be new to me. She’s done a lot for me. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Edmund and Gwen had dissimilar experiences as compared to Aaden and Becca. During his one-on-one interview, Edmund, GET participant, candidly said:

> Um, my mentor didn’t really help me. She was always in the next room and did not stop by and see how I was doing. I had a lot of questions. It led me to view her as kind of an adversary. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Similarly, during her one-on-one interview, Gwen, SET participant, disclosed that “coming in to a new school, she was the first one that I met and was taught all the wrong things. That caused a lot of stress. So, I did not feel supported” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

Collaboration was an essential component of healthy mentor-mentee reciprocal relationships. At a high level, collaboration occurred with the flow of materials and ideas and a host of reciprocal learning experiences such as attending monthly training meetings, planning lessons, demonstrating how to use the school system, explaining processes, creating a classroom management plan, reviewing building policies and routines, and introducing the mentee to colleagues. During her one-on-one interview, Candice mentioned that Lindsey, her mentor, helped her gain pedagogical knowledge and said, “She gave me a book on teaching foreign language skills, which I am reading. It talks about educational theory so I can generalize and
On a specialized level, SET mentors assisted mentees with learning to prepare and read an IEP, scheduling students for testing, managing case loads, co-teaching, co-planning outside of work, working together to accomplish goals, and creating treatment plans. During her one-on-one interview, Haley, a first year SET said, “If I have questions, I’ll ask Paige, my mentor. She and I attend the new teacher meetings. I find that really helpful” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). During her one-on-one interview, Isabella, a first year SET, said about Quella, her mentor:

She welcomed me with open arms. I met at her house numerous times and had dinner over there as we were doing work, you know, setting up our students’ programs. So, just the fact that she took the time, like, out of school hours to meet with me to make sure that I was understanding what I needed to do in order to make it easier on both of us in the long run. So, um, she really just showed compassion and caring and interested in helping me. She continues to help me every day. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

**Characteristics of Mentors.** GET and SET participants, principals, mentors, and mentor coordinator alluded to characteristics evident in mentors: teaches the same content or specialty and has three years of experience. Regarding personality attributes, mentors were helpful, non-evaluative, trustworthy, personable, knowledgeable, nurturing, and believed in the school’s culture.

During one-on-one interviews, the following characteristics were mentioned. Sabrina, Ryan, Tabitha, and Udele, participants and principals, agreed that qualified mentors had three years of experience and taught a similar position. Furthermore, there was open communication
built on confidentiality and trust. Jacquelyn, SET mentor, said, “Right up front, my mentee knows that I am not doing evaluations” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Sabrina said, “I want somebody who is not only personable but very knowledgeable about the position” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Udele, and Ryan, principals, mentioned interpersonal characteristics of mentors. Udele said, “I try to find someone who is going to have the time and desire to support the beginning teacher” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Ryan said, “I want someone who will help nurture them along in their teaching career. I want someone who believes in our school culture” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

SET participants valued experience, close proximity, and similar background as key characteristics of mentors. Faith said, “My mentor, Natalie, is also a speech and language pathologist who has been in the building for many years. We have the same background. That’s what helps me trust her” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). The mentor-mentee reciprocal relationship was summed up best by Ryan, who said during his one-on-one interview, “It is a safeguard for that new teacher and about keeping them on and not letting them go” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

Challenges of the Mentoring Process. Within the context of a healthy mentor-mentee relationship, there were challenges that mentors and mentees grappled with and found common ground. Numerically, this sub-theme resulted in the sixth highest open-code value and was found 15 times across all data sets. GET and SET participants and their mentors mentioned that scheduling quality time to interact, finding time to train the mentee, and balancing teaching responsibilities were struggles embedded in the relationship. None of these challenges were easy to overcome.
During the focus group interview, GET and SET participants voiced their struggles with the mentoring process. Dalton, GET participant, mentioned, “Our daily schedules, my mentor’s and mine, are not aligned. Like, you cannot get immediate answers. It is hard. It is not preventing me from getting what I need. It is the timing of it” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Isabella, SET participant, said, “I have the privilege of my mentor as my co-teacher, even so, there is no structured time throughout the day so we have to talk before and after school” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Faith, SET participant, chimed in and said, “Testing and IEP paperwork, to service our case load, is how my mentor and I spend our time together” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Candice, GET participant, respected her mentor’s time and responded:

We have the same block as prep. But I am very careful to not gobble up 15 minutes of my mentor’s time because she has classes to prepare for too. I do not know how to read an IEP. And I feel nervous about not knowing about all the particulars. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Isabella, SET participant, agreed with Candice and stated:

Our mentors are full time teachers. They have caseload in addition to helping you float—keeping your head about water. Still, I need to know how to write IEP reports and legal assessments and do not have the training to do it right now. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

These were systemic challenges and required juggling on the part of mentors and mentees to resolve. With patience and time, mentors provided the necessary support and guidance, which reduced their mentee’s level of stress, increased their confidence, and improved the relationship. During one-on-one interviews, Edmund, GET, and Gwen, SET, participants disclosed a
negative relationship with their mentors. Regrettably, their mentors delivered a lower level of support than mentees expected. Edmund said, “My mentor didn’t really help me” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Gwen said, “You know, my mentor kind of failed me” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Thus, they felt disappointed with the mentoring process. The pain of the experience was in their voice. These two mentees did not advocate for themselves and did not contact the mentor coordinator for support and guidance.

Role of the Mentor Coordinator. The district mentoring program rests on the shoulders of Vance, mentor coordinator and participant. Vance is the central contact for questions and concerns related to the mentoring program. During his tenure, Vance created the Mentor Handbook and led the New Teacher Orientation Workshop, which occurred annually one week before school started. The handbook and notes from the workshop were site documents inspected for relevance to the study.

The Mentor Handbook was a 35-page document that contained a checklist of things for mentors to discuss with their mentees at various points throughout the year. Lindsey, GET mentor, did not know it existed and requested such a document during her one-on-one interview. The first few pages were out-of-date, referred to the previous year’s stipend paid to mentors, and included the prior school year’s monthly training schedule. Next the handbook contained (a) motivational pieces, (b) articles related to mentoring, (c) a table describing the Phases of First-Year Teaching: Anticipation, Survival, Disillusionment, Rejuvenation, Reflection, and Anticipation and (d) suggestions for mentors and mentees to complete before school starts such as to tour the facility and to discuss procedures, resources, discipline, curriculum, and classroom. In the next section of the handbook, there was (e) a list of 40 Support Strategies, (f) proper
verbiage of giving suggestions, and (g) Mentor Meeting Log. At the end of the handbook, there was a confidentiality disclosure, which described the mentor-mentee relationship and emphasized the confidential nature of the relationship which could be breached for the following reasons: (a) students’ safety, (b) resource professional needs to help teacher (e.g. design specialized lessons), or (c) mentor-to-mentor confidential discussion about a new teacher’s performance.

The New Teacher Orientation Day was held one week before school started. The Assistant Superintendent introduced town officials such as the Mayor, Superintendent, school committee members, and Vance, mentor coordinator. Next, 27 newly hired GETs and SETs were introduced. Then, the researcher was introduced and had 10 minutes to discuss her research topic and encourage potential new hires to participate in the study.

During orientation, various topics were discussed such as appropriate dress, curriculum and planning, sick days, Positive Behavior Intervention Program, and social media policy. From there, Vance provided an overview of the district’s mentoring program, which included topics related to the new teacher monthly meeting, professional development, and weekly faculty meeting. The afternoon was filled with presentations from the teachers’ union, technology information, special education system, and about other policies and procedures.

Overall, the meeting was well organized. New hires received two handouts: (a) key people to contact throughout the district, and (b) step-by-step guide on how to log on to the network and use school technology. The researcher empathized with new hires and felt overwhelmed with the pace of delivery of information.

When the meeting was over, the researcher had an opportunity to talk with Vance and get acquainted. The researcher left the meeting feeling proud to be associated with a town and
school district that trained and supported beginning teachers. The researcher put the day in perspective and realized that she would attend a new teacher orientation day at a university in the near future.

**Suggestions for Mentor Coordinator to Consider.** The sub-theme, suggestions for a mentor coordinator to consider, was unexpected. During one-on-one interviews and the focus group session, the following seven suggestions were recommended to improve the district mentoring program. First, provide a mentor training class prior to having someone assume the role of mentor, and train current mentors. Second, start a monthly mentor meeting and collaborate on best practices. Third, omit the agenda at one training meeting and allow beginning teachers to talk about issues. During the focus group session, Candice, GET participant, said, “I think it would be really good for teachers to have a session and talk about what really bothers them (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

Fourth, assign mentors to mentees before school starts. Kelsey, GET mentor, disclosed during her one-on-one interview:

> I found out a couple days into the school year that I was going to be Becca’s mentor. So, it would have been nice to, um, find that out sooner. That way we could have one mentor training session and expectations could be laid out. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Lindsey, GET mentor, had a similar experience and said:

> I didn’t find out that I was going to be a mentor until, um, the beginning of the year. So, we didn’t have any contact time until we got to school. Um, I think, also, it would be good to meet as mentors and instruct the instructors. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)
Fifth, improve the Mentor Handbook and provide support and guidance to assist and orient special education teachers and specialists. Paige, SET mentor, said during the one-on-one interview, “This is my third time as a mentor. The Mentor Handbook doesn’t apply to occupational therapists. I need something to get my young occupational therapists up and running” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

Sixth, invite a special education specialist to attend the monthly training meeting and present relevant topics in the field of special education. Gwen, SET participant, and Isabella, SET participant, voiced the same sentiment during one-on-one interviews. Isabella, said, “I feel like I don’t get as much out of the monthly training meeting as I do with spending time with my assigned mentor” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). The monthly training meeting should meet the needs of beginning GETs and SETs.

Seventh, invite SET new hires at the New Teacher Orientation Day to meet with veteran special education teachers and specialists, discuss relevant topics, and answer questions. During her one-on-one interview, Isabella, SET participant, proposed having a “special education subset [of the New Teacher Orientation Day] and invite somebody from special education to come in and talk with the special education teachers and somebody to talk with the specialists” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). All in all, the seven suggestions could improve the district mentoring program and New Teacher Orientation Day.

A Mindset of Support Permeates the School Culture

This was the third theme that emerged and provided answers to research question five. Four distinct sub-themes were identified within the main theme: (a) Beginning teachers’ perception of support received from principals, (b) Principals’ perception of support of beginning teachers, (c) Challenges within the role of principal, and (d) Suggestions for principals to
consider. Principals set the tone at the top, which permeated the school culture.

**Beginning Teachers’ Perception of Support from Principals.** Beginning teachers were asked about the support they received from principals. During one-on-one interviews and the focus group session, nine GET and SET participants described their interactions with administrators. Numerically, this sub-theme resulted in the fourth highest open-code value and was found 22 times across all data sets. Beginning teachers’ perception of support from principals fluctuated depending on their role and challenges they faced in the classroom, in graduate school, and at home.

GET participants perceived that principals created a school environment that encouraged respect, kindness, and teamwork. Principals were open to questions and approachable. During one-on-one interviews, GET participants spoke frankly about their impression of support from administrators. Aaden said, “The administration supports my needs by making me feel part of the team. They ask for my input during meetings and are willing to answer questions” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Becca, said, “My principal comes across in a non-threatening manner. She is there to support me. If I need anything, I’m never afraid to ask” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Candice spoke from a more inclusive viewpoint and declared, “I feel like everyone’s working together. From the staff, secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, everybody’s part of the team. It really is a wonderful place. The team effort has been the biggest thing that has impressed me” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

Administrators set the tone for delivery of good instruction. During the focus group session, Edmund disclosed his mixed emotions and said candidly:

**Administrators are always willing to help with classroom management.** It is true. They
provide materials, technical support, and curriculum. Yet, no one tells you when you are doing things right. When you slip up, such as late with the attendance, you hear about it. I noticed a lot of negativity. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

SETs assumed a different role in the school district. During observation of a mentor-mentee coaching session, Jacquelyn, mentor, said to Faith, her mentee, “SETs are not the teacher of record. They work together with the classroom teacher to accomplish learning goals.” During one-on-one interviews, SET participants appreciated that principals created a school environment that was inclusive, positive, friendly, responsive, and helpful. One SET participant, Isabella, said her principal treated the staff “like family” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Faith offered her perspective and said:

I have an administrator in the building and administrator of special services. If I have a question, they’re so communicative. I email them a question and they respond right back. The principal helps me with the daily stuff; knowing the rules and regulations. I feel supported in different ways. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Haley had a similar experience. She described her principal and said, “She called me into her office and asked if I had any questions. She ran through the flow of things and gave me some other people to talk to if I had questions” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Gwen felt strongly about administrators. She summed up her experience and disclosed:

I worked at four other high schools. The environment here is by far the best, um, with great positive administrators, who are very supportive. Um, we have a reverse inclusion internship and a lot of general education students are getting involved with my students.
It just makes me feel like we’re actually a part of the school and we’re very much a central part of this school. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

**Principals’ Perception of Support of Beginning Teachers.** Principals’ support of beginning teachers set the tone at the top and is the foundation of the district’s mentoring program. As new hires, beginning teachers were vulnerable and required support. Numerically, this sub-theme resulted in the fifth highest open-code value and was found 21 times across all data sets.

During one-on-one interviews, four principals described the behaviors they displayed as evidence of support of beginning teachers. On a macro level, principals described the criteria they used to match mentors with new hires, invited new hires to the school to get acquainted before school starts, allowed new hires release time to observe colleagues, and hosted district mentoring events. All principals mentioned they followed district policy and selected mentors who had at least three years of experience, and matched them with newly hired mentees based on content, specialty, and personality. Ryan, high school principal, described succinctly the criteria used across the district to select and match mentors with mentees:

> If I have a brand new teacher, I’m going to make sure that I look to a teacher that’s going to be a good fit, nurture them along in their teaching career in their first year and into their second year. They must have three years of experience. Personality wise, we try and match them with a similar personality. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

On a daily basis, principals disclosed that they made it their business to interact frequently with new hires. While circulating the building, principals found out what else they could do to support beginning teachers (e.g. answer questions or provide supplies, materials, or
During their rounds, they checked in with mentors and mentees and found out how things were going. Tabitha, principal, said, “We support beginning teachers with buying supplies for their classroom and the mentoring program” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). Udele, principal, proudly said:

Our administrators and our secretaries stay in touch with our new teachers; ya know, check in with them from time to time and see how they’re doing. Find out if they have any, um, specific needs or areas of concern. I always let them know, if there are any resources that they feel they need, please make sure they see me so we can, um, order what they need. I try, you know, to treat them on a personal level and a professional level as well. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

As chief administrator, principals disclosed their primary responsibility was setting expectations and reviewing them periodically with newly hired beginning teachers. Sabrina, principal, described her support of beginning teachers this way:

I personally meet with them, um, very early on to discuss my expectations, um, around goal setting. I touch base with my teachers almost every day. Um, even if I am not sitting in their classroom, I’m just asking them if there is anything I can do to support them, and I do. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Principals’ secondary responsibility was to observe beginning teachers formally and informally, complete a performance review, and provide feedback. Performance reviews were a necessary task to be completed in a timely manner. During the focus group interview, Candice, GET participant, revealed that she had an informal evaluation with her principal. During the evaluation, Candice disclosed that her principal said, “I want to see your lesson plan, where you are going this week, what is the big idea, and is it tied to the standards?” As a beginning teacher,
Candice had a subsequent meeting with her mentor to find out about the standards and how to tie the lesson to the standards. In summary, beginning teachers’ performance reviews go well to the extent they receive the proper amount of support from principals, mentors, and veteran teachers.

**Challenges within the Role of Principal.** There are challenges embedded in every job. During one-on-one interviews, GET participants described challenges within the work environment: Sense of isolation, heavy workload, minimal socialization, and cliquey colleagues. Edmund disclosed honestly:

> My school is isolating. There is a lot of stress, which gets to everyone in different ways… Everyone feels like they got a lot of work to do. Um, there’s not a lot of socialization going on and it’s very cliquey. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Mentor participants found out after school started that they were paired with a mentee, which prevented them from getting acquainted and discussing content, which hindered the relationship. Lindsey, GET mentor expressed her feelings and said, “I didn’t find out that I was going to be Candice’s mentor until, um, the beginning of the year. So we didn’t have any real contact time until we’d gotten to school” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). These challenges created tension in the work place and resulted in beginning teachers and mentors’ disappointment with the work environment and mentoring program.

**Suggestions for Principals to Consider.** During the focus group session, participants were asked, “What can school administrators do to provide you with better support?” Two suggestions were proposed by GET participants and two suggestions were proposed by SET participants. GET participants recommended: (a) provide a second prep time for teachers working on a graduate degree, and (b) assign mentor to mentee at hire date. Edmund voiced his
opinion and said:

I need a second prep time. I really feel we do not get enough time to adequately prepare. Now that I have my course load and have to earn a master’s degree, I find myself staying at the building till 5 or 6 o’clock some nights. It is taking a major toll on me both socially and emotionally. It really kills your motivation. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Candice and her mentor were matched after school started. Because she lacked pedagogical training, Candice preferred an earlier match with her mentor to get acquainted and go over the curriculum and procedures.

In contrast, SET participants suggested: (a) provide a prep time, and (b) provide feedback on goals. Isabella spoke candidly and said,

We need more prep time… With the weight of the evaluation process and how much this evaluation matters; I would hope there is more feedback from the evaluator throughout the entire process. Like, feedback on whether or not your goals are in line with what you are trying to accomplish. You submit goals by a certain date and do not hear anything. And then, you are supposed to be evaluated and gather evidence to support that. So, I just feel there is a lack of, or disconnect, between who is doing the evaluation, who is being evaluation, what really needs to be done, and why we are even doing it. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Research Questions

All research questions were answered by one or more of the three themes described in detail in the previous section. The three themes were (a) Beginning teachers require molding and shaping to impact school culture, (b) Beginning teachers imitate to replicate the school culture,
and (c) A mindset of support permeates the school culture. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the experiences of K-12 beginning teachers who receive mentoring?

RQ2: What are the challenges of K-12 beginning teachers and strategies used to overcome challenges?

RQ3: What are the perceptions of beginning teachers of general education about beginning teachers of special education and vice versa?

RQ4: What obstacles prevent effective mentoring of beginning teachers?

RQ5: How do mentors support beginning teachers?

RQ6: How do school administrators support beginning teachers?

RQ7: How does a district mentoring program and mentor coordinator support beginning teachers?

**Research question one.** Research question one was the central question of the study and asked what are the experiences of K-12 beginning teachers who receive mentoring. This question was answered as a result of all three themes: (a) Beginning teachers require molding and shaping to impact the school culture; (b) Beginning teachers imitate to replicate the school culture; (c) A mindset of support permeates the school culture. GET and SET participants entered the classroom with lofty ideas. With all of their ambition, passion, and energy, beginning GETs and SET influenced students to learn. Simultaneously, beginning teachers learned from observing their mentor and other colleagues. Very early in their first year, beginning teachers realized they had gaps in their preservice training (e.g. lack of courses in classroom management and differentiated instruction), which required them to sign up for graduate school and take professional development courses. Within the context of a positive
learning environment that valued inclusion, respect, and kindness, GET and SET participants were supported by mentors, veteran teachers, and administrators.

**Research question two.** Research question two concerned the challenges of K-12 beginning teachers and strategies used to overcome these challenges. Theme one, beginning teachers require molding and shaping to impact the culture, answered this question. In aggregate, GET and SET participants were challenged with transfer of coursework to their workplace, volume of work, time management, collegial relationships, and preparing and reading individualized development plans. In particular, GET participants agreed that learning school policies, classroom management, lesson planning, and grading were difficult for classroom teachers at the beginning of their career. Within this context, GET participants reported that work-life balance and isolation amplified the aforementioned issues.

In contrast, SET participants believed that assessments were problematic for beginning teachers. Because every student has unique learning needs, SET participants felt nervous and unsure of themselves when tasked with creating and administering tests. To compound the issue, SET participants were overwhelmed by the number of students requiring support, found there to be an insufficient number of SETs to address students’ demands, and lacked time to co-plan with GETs. In the end, two SET participants summed up their experience. Isabella said, “I feel alive but am gasping for breath,” and Gwen said, “I feel like I am floating with a life saver under one arm” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

Interpersonal strategies were discussed by GET and SET participants to cope with challenges faced early in their career. GET and SET participants valued advice from mentors and colleagues above all other coping mechanisms. GET participants relied on organizational skills and classroom management plans, whereas SET participants valued psychosocial strategies
such as controlling emotions, staying positive, and interacting with colleagues who had a positive outlook on life. Most importantly, fairness, praise, respect, patience, and humor were viable strategies that worked well in classrooms.

**Research question three.** Research question three explored the perceptions of beginning GETs about beginning SETs and vice versa. Theme one, beginning teachers require molding and shaping to impact the culture, answered this question. GET and SET participants perceived an imbalance of time in the work place. GET participants had at least one preparation period, whereas SET participants did not have a preparation period. Furthermore, participants divulged that GETs and SETs who were co-teaching did not have common planning time. GET participants stated that they interacted with their mentors during the day. Due to a shortage of time, SET participants interacted with their mentors before and after school or while co-teaching. Lastly, GET participants observed that administrators had minimal difficulty hiring qualified substitute teachers for their classrooms. Their lesson plans were easy to follow. Conversely, SET participants perceived that administrators had difficulty finding qualified teachers to cover their classrooms so they could attend professional development courses. SET students had individualized programs, which teachers unfamiliar with special education programs might find difficult to follow and implement.

**Research question four.** Research question four asked about obstacles that prevent effective mentoring of beginning teachers. Theme two, beginning teachers imitate to replicate the school culture, addressed this question. GET and SET participants perceived a shortage of time was the primary obstacle that prevented effective mentoring. Preparation time, meetings, consulting with classroom teachers, and paperwork trumped mentoring time. Furthermore, GET participants observed that their schedule and their mentors’ schedule were not aligned.
Nevertheless, they found time to interact during school hours. In contrast, one GET participant revealed that his mentor left the district, which left him with no support and no opportunity for reciprocal learning.

SET participants disclosed that they lacked prep time and supported a heavy case load, which resulted in paperwork, consulting with the classroom teachers, testing students, writing reports, and attending meetings. These duties edged out mentoring and resulted in interacting with mentors before and after school or while co-teaching. For these reasons, SET participants experienced less mentoring than their GET counterparts. GET and SET participants acknowledged that mentors were full time teachers who juggled their own needs and their mentee’s needs.

On a positive note, GET and SET participants sited strategies that enhanced mentoring. They agreed that attending the district’s monthly training meeting was helpful. Furthermore, GETs and SETs found that taking professional development courses was a positive way to close knowledge gaps and reduce reliance on mentors. Specifically, GET participants believed that as they observed colleagues, followed procedures, and applied what they learned, they would meet expectations.

SET participants found it helpful to co-teach with their mentor. Co-teaching put them in close proximity to their mentor and enabled them to have questions answered immediately instead of waiting to interact before or after school. Overall, GET and SET participants challenged themselves to embrace the notion that growth does not take place in a day.

**Research question five.** Research question five was concerned with how mentors support beginning teachers. Theme two, beginning teachers imitate to replicate the school culture, addressed this question. GET and SET participants agreed on five characteristics of
mentors: (a) model good instruction, (b) close proximity to mentee, (c) interact frequently, (d) collaborate by observing each other, sharing ideas, answering questions, setting up classroom, and (e) co-planning. In particular, GET participants appreciated that their mentors reviewed their lesson plans. In contrast, SET participants collaborated with their mentors to accomplish goals, consulted with classroom teachers, and set up differentiated student programs. Some goals were accomplished while mentors and mentees ate dinner and socialized. During the focus group session, Isabella said, “My mentor, she is a great friend of mine, and I am very fortunate for what she has been able to do… she is somebody to socialize with and to share daily successes and struggles with” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015). In addition, during one-on-one interview, Isabella disclosed, “I met at her [mentor’s] house numerous times and had dinner as we were doing work setting up students’ programs” (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015).

**Research question six.** Research question six explored how school administrators support beginning teachers. Theme three, a mindset of support permeates the school culture, addressed this question. GET and SET participants disclosed support they received from administrators. They perceived administrators were approachable, kind, and friendly. Within this context, GET participants felt supported because principals set expectations that were achievable, provided a mentor, observed and gave them meaningful feedback, and connected them to tools to assist with delivery of instruction. One GET participant, Candice, mentioned that Instructional Technology individuals were sensitive to her needs. SET participants felt their principals and special education coordinated created an inclusive work environment that was responsive, positive, and treated them like family.

In contrast, GET and SET participants perceived that principals could create a better
work environment. As beginning teachers, they agreed that the heavy workload was burdensome, which increased stress. During the focus group session, a GET and SET participant agreed that principals could provide more observation and feedback on goals. Furthermore, principals could create a work environment that included more socialization which would break down clique within the school. Lastly, principals could assign mentors to mentees before school started to help GETs and SETs assimilate sooner.

**Research question seven.** Research question seven asked how the district mentoring program and coordinator support beginning teachers. Theme two, beginning teachers imitate to replicate the school culture, answered this question. During the interview, Vance, mentor coordinator, described his role as the central contact for the district’s mentoring program that answered questions, provided a Mentor Handbook, and coordinated the New Teacher Orientation Day. During the interview, Vance reminisced about support of new teacher before the school district adopted a formal mentoring program. He believed the formal mentoring program held mentors accountable to train their mentees and provided beginning teachers with a higher level of support today than when the program started more than a decade ago. To improve the program, Vance suggested an increase in the stipend of $315 to $600 and more in line with other school districts.

During interviews, GET and SET participants agreed that the monthly training meeting was somewhat helpful. SET participants perceived that the monthly training meeting and New Teacher Orientation Day emphasized general education. Specifically, SET participants believed that the Special Education Coordinator and other specialists should attend the monthly training meeting and New Teacher Orientation Day so they could hear about relevant topics in the field of special education.
GET and SET mentors had multiple concerns. First, mentors wanted formal mentor training prior to assignment of mentees and monthly mentor meetings to hear what other mentors were doing and to discuss best practices. Second, mentors desired pairing with mentees to get acquainted and bond before school started. Third, SET mentors were looking for tools to get new occupational therapists up and running quickly. Lastly, the Mentoring Handbook did not specifically address special education.

After answering the research questions, a description from different perspectives, roles, and functions followed. The researcher developed a textural description (i.e. what was the experience of beginning teachers who received mentoring), which is the fifth step of data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). One important finding from this comparative study was that participants had a shared language. They used phrases central to mentoring such as “shared knowledge,” “similar background,” “support system,” “open relationship,” “top-down support,” “teamwork,” “trust,” “compassion and interest in helping,” and “desire to help others develop professionally.” In particular, GET and SET participants used words such as “supported,” “welcomed,” and “felt like family.” In aggregate, these phrases influenced participants’ perception of mentoring in relationship to their commitment to their career and school.

Beginning teachers graduated from college with lofty ideas, ambition, and energy. They desired to mold and shape young minds. After they entered the classroom, reality set in. Beginning teachers realized they had gaps in their preservice training and much to learn in their current assignment. To assist with learning, principals matched beginning teachers with mentors and asked the pair to observe each other and veteran teachers. Mentors and mentees bonded and built a relationship based on confidence and trust. Over the course of time, mentors and mentees participated in reciprocal learning. Mentees acquired strategies learned from interactions with
mentors and veteran teachers, which improved their delivery of instruction. In the process, mentors and mentees reconstructed their relationships. As mentees felt adequate and confident, they did not require support from their mentors. They functioned independent of their mentor.

In contrast, some mentor-mentee relationships were not restructured. For various reasons, mentors and mentees were not compatible. Edmund’s mentor transferred to another school district, which left him feeling disconnected from the mentor-mentee reciprocal relationship. Gwen’s mentor provided an insufficient amount of support. She disclosed, “I got a lot of negative feedback from my mentor. So I do not feel supported. But other teachers stepped up. I found other teachers who would assist me. My mentor failed me.” Gwen’s shyness and fear of not meeting expectations prevented her from discussing the issue with Vance, the mentor coordinator. Candice’s mentor, Paige, required her to stay after school and complete certain tasks, which made her feel like Paige’s employee. During her one-on-one interview, Candice divulged that Paige said, “I don’t want you to leave the building today until this is done.” Candice felt that her mentor’s demand was unreasonable.

The mentor coordinator interacted with principals to acquire a list of new hires, invite them to monthly training, and shared the agenda with mentors. Vance, mentor coordinator, was available to answer questions and advocate for mentors or mentees when the relationship was not going well. Gwen, Edmund, and Candice did not contact Vance and discuss their issues with him.

In summary, principals, mentor coordinator, mentors, veteran teachers, beginning teachers, and staff worked together to create an inclusive school environment that supported beginning teachers’ growth. There was no perfect school. For various reasons, some participants overlooked advocating for themselves and bringing their issues to the attention of
their principal or mentor coordinator. Thus, six of nine beginning teachers were satisfied and three of nine beginning teachers were dissatisfied with their mentoring experience, which impacted their efficacy and commitment to their career and school.

After step five, the researcher reflected and constructed a structural description (i.e. how the experience occurred), which is the sixth step of data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). A structural description elucidated the conditions that influenced how SET and GET participants experienced mentoring and centered around (a) relationship to self (b) relationship to others, (c) relationship to work, (d) element of time, and (e) thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

In relationship to self, the mentoring relationship is built on trust and mentees’ desire to change behavior and follow instructions. Human nature, in general, and Americans, in particular, wants to take control and remain independent. There is an inner tug of war vying for GET and SET participants to relinquish control, trust mentors, listen to what they say, and apply their recommendations. Lindsey, GET mentor, said, “I think she [mentee] respects me. She watched me teach, but there are moments she does not listen to me.” Mentees must be teachable, internalize what they learn, and apply it to their craft. As principals, Ryan, Sabrina, and Udele selected veteran teachers who were personable, possessed a nurturing personality, had the time and desire to provide support, and were knowledgeable about the mentee’s position. Mentees learned how to become mentors by observing and applying what they learned from their mentors.

In relationship to others, expectations were placed on GET and SET participants. During working hours, GET participants had a set number of classes to teach each day while SET participants managed their case load. Aaden said, “I am learning to adapt and cope with the rigors of the job; teaching five classes a day for five days a week.” In contrast, SET participants
were tasked with managing a heavy case load. Gwen said, “I have 11 students from pre-primer to twelfth grade and five paraprofessionals. I hope I do not burn out. It is exhausting, yet very rewarding.” Beginning SETs struggled to meet the needs of their students who needed more assistance than they could give. To cope with exhaustion, Natalie, SET mentor, said, “My job is to make my mentee feel very comfortable, explain the process, and work together to meet students’ needs.” Indeed, beginning teachers felt pressured to meet expectations and to cope with exhaustion.

In relationship to work, teachers’ working conditions were a factor in beginning GET and SET’s satisfaction and commitment to their career. Working conditions affected how participants felt about their work environment. Edmund, GET participant, said, “Everyone feels like they have a lot of work to do. There is not a lot of socializing going on, and it’s very cliquey.” Candice, GET participant said, “Teachers working conditions affect efficacy and commitment.”

Without a mentor, Edmund, GET participant, felt left out of the reciprocal relationship. Edmund needed reassurance that he mattered and focused on the negative and stressful work environment. With formal appraisals looming on the horizon, he was unsure where he stood with administrators and asked for more observation and feedback. Isabella, SET participant, agreed with Edmund and said, “There has to be more feedback from the evaluator throughout the entire process. Feedback on whether goals are aligned with objectives.” On a positive note, Isabella summed up her perception of the work environment and said, “Regardless of how crazy or disheveled you feel leaving school, there are at least 10 positive things to take away from the day.” Without a doubt, working conditions affected participants’ efficacy and commitment to career and school.
Regarding the element of time, GET and SET participants perceived a disproportionate amount of time, which left them feeling frustrated and demotivated. SET participants mentioned they had no prep time whereas GETs had a pre time. Paper work, reports, and consulting with classroom teachers crowded out time with SETs’ mentors. Isabella pointed out that there was no time to interact with her mentor during the day unless they were co-teaching. Faith disclosed that she was co-teaching with a GET but had no time for co-planning. Natalie, a wise SET mentor, said, “It is important to be on guard and watch for burnout due to lack of sufficient time to meet students’ needs.” Time management was the key to surviving the demands of the job. At the end of the day, beginning teachers either went home or went to graduate school, which left them with no time to reflect and imagine life with more time and fewer expectations. Edmund, GET participant, summed up his experience and said, “There is nothing quite as depressing as going in at dawn and leaving at dusk. It really kills your motivation.”

In relation to thoughts, feelings, and emotions, GET and SET participants described their thoughts and feelings and how they influenced their perception of mentoring. Beginning teachers, as new hires, were vulnerable and needy. They had gaps in their knowledge and lacked certain skills. Faith, an SET participant, said, “I worry and am nervous that I will do something wrong, miss a deadline, or forget to do something. As nervousness diminishes, my efficacy will increase. So, I think time and becoming more comfortable will improve my confidence.” Candice, a GET participant said, “I feel nervous about not knowing how to read an IEP, which has not been addressed by my mentor. Gwen, a SET participant, said, “I got a lot of negative feedback from my mentor. So I do not feel supported. But other teachers stepped up. I found other teachers who would assist me. My mentor failed me.” Gwen’s shyness and fear of not meeting expectations prevented her from discussing the issue with Vance, the mentor.
Some GET and SET participants felt stressed. Edmund, GET participant said, “There’s a lot of stress… you are walking on egg shells.” Some participants were better at coping with the stress of being new teachers than other participants. Two SET participants mentioned “I exercise” and the other one said, “I don’t really show much emotion. I just de-stress after school.” Overall, structural descriptions revealed the conditions that provided additional context and deeper meaning of the phenomenon.

Lastly, textural and structural descriptions were concatenated to understand the essence of the experience. Essence is the seventh step Moustakas (1994) proposed to analyze phenomenological data. The impact of mentoring on participants was summed up by the Flow Effect: A Culture of Reciprocity. See Figure 1.

*Figure 1. The Flow Effect: A Culture of Reciprocity*
Within the context of an inclusive work environment, principals, mentor coordinator, mentors, veteran teachers, and staff supported GET and SET participants. Principals paired mentors with mentees and hoped that the relationship would thrive. Throughout the relationship, confidentiality and trust were critical to maintain the relationship. As the relationship flourished, flow developed. As mentors and mentees observed each other and shared ideas, methods, materials, reciprocal learning took place. Over the course of time, mentees acquired skills and confidence, which reconstructed their relationship. Thus, mentees were less needy and functioned independent of their mentors. At maturity, principals selected fully mature mentees to assume the role of mentors. At that point, the flow effect started again. Mentors reflected on what it was like to be a vulnerable, growing mentee and wanted a better experience for their mentee. The essence of what mentors learned as beginning teachers flowed naturally into their mentees.

The flow effect was apparent in the data. One GET mentor said, “I had a wonderful mentor who provided emotional support, um, to bounce ideas off her and have them validated. I wanted to be able to give that experience to somebody else.” Another GET mentor said, “I want a better experience for my mentee.” Another SET mentor talked about her reciprocal relationship and said, “I learned from new teachers’ suggestions and shared my ideas.” A principal described the flow effect as “helping beginning teachers along in their teaching career in their first year and maybe into their second year.” The flow effect is situated within on a culture of reciprocity and support.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter Four was to describe the experiences of K-12 participants within a comparative phenomenological context. The researcher explored the impact of mentoring on
K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to career and school, and why beginning teachers in special education received less mentoring than their counterparts in general education. Private interviews, observations, a focus group session, and site documents elucidated the experiences of 22 participants regarding the phenomenon. Three themes emerged from this analysis: (a) Beginning teachers require molding and shaping to impact school culture, (b) Beginning teachers imitate to replicate the school culture, and (c) A mindset of support permeates the school culture. From there, textural and structural descriptions illustrated the phenomenon. Lastly, the essence of what it means to be a K-12 beginning teacher and the impact of mentoring on their efficacy and commitment to their school and career culminated in the Flow Effect: A Culture of Reciprocity. The flow effect benefits the school culture. Ryan, principal, summed up the experience and said, “Mentoring is a kind of safeguard to keeping teachers on and not letting them go.” Principals, mentor coordinator, mentors, veteran teachers, beginning teachers, staff, and students benefited from the flow effect. The entire culture learned and grew together, which ultimately improved students’ academic achievement. A more detailed summary of findings and discussion are presented in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to compare the experiences of K-12 beginning teachers of general education (GETs) with teachers of special education (SETs) in a school district in the north eastern section of the United States and examine the impact of mentoring on their efficacy and commitment to career. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: (a) beginning teacher with five or fewer years of experience, (b) currently mentored or mentored within the last five years, (c) full or part time teacher in the school district, or (d) mentor, principal, or mentor coordinator who provides support to beginning teachers. This chapter begins with a summary of findings, and then a discussion of study findings is presented in relationship to the theoretical framework and literature. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

This comparative phenomenological study was guided by one central research question and six sub-questions to understand the experiences of nine beginning teachers who received support from their mentors, mentor coordinator, principals, and staff. Data were collected from interviews, observations, a focus group session, and site documents. The data were analyzed using seven steps proposed by Moustakas (1994) to elucidate the essence of the experience and perceptions of participants. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the experiences of K-12 beginning teachers who receive mentoring?

RQ2: What are the challenges of K-12 beginning teachers and strategies used to overcome challenges?

RQ3: What are the perceptions of beginning teachers of general education about
beginning teachers of special education and vice versa?

RQ4: What obstacles prevent effective mentoring of beginning teachers?

RQ5: How do mentors support beginning teachers?

RQ6: How do school administrators support beginning teachers?

RQ7: How does a district mentoring program and mentor coordinator support beginning teachers?

Research question one was the central question of the study and asked what are the experiences of K-12 beginning teachers who receive mentoring. This question was answered as a result of all three themes: (a) Beginning teachers require molding and shaping to impact the school culture; (b) Beginning teachers imitate to replicate the school culture; and (c) A mindset of support permeates the school culture. GET and SET participants entered the classroom with lofty ideas to mold and shape young minds. Very quickly, these beginning teachers realized they had gaps in their preservice training and did not possess all of the knowledge and skills of other competent teachers. To overcome these deficits, GET and SET participants depended on their mentors for a period of time. When beginning teachers felt confident and knowledgeable, their relationship with their mentor changed. Beginning teachers then required little or no support from their mentors. Thus, beginning teachers began functioning independent of their mentors.

Research question two concerned the challenges of K-12 beginning teachers and strategies used to overcome these challenges. Theme one, beginning teachers require molding and shaping to impact the culture, answered this question. In aggregate, GET and SET participants were challenged by the work load, which required time management and reliance on colleagues to help them prepare and read individualized educational plans. In particular, GET participants agreed that classroom management, lesson planning, and grading were difficult to
manage. These challenges exacerbated work-life balance. In contrast, SET participants believed that assessments were problematic. To compound the issue, SET participants were overwhelmed by the number of students requiring support and found there to be an insufficient number of SETs to address students’ demands, which left them with no time to co-plan with GETs.

Various strategies were proposed to cope with the challenges beginning teachers faced. GET and SET participants valued advice from mentors and colleagues. Specifically, GET participants relied on organizational skills and classroom management plans, whereas SET participants valued psychosocial strategies such as controlling emotions and maintaining a positive outlook on life. Most importantly, fairness, praise, respect, patience, and humor were effective strategies to cope with classroom challenges.

Research question three explored the perceptions of beginning GETs about beginning SETs and vice versa. Theme one, beginning teachers require molding and shaping to impact the culture, answered this question. GET and SET participants perceived an imbalance of time in the work place. GET participants had at least one preparation period, whereas SET participants did not have a preparation period. Furthermore, co-teachers did not have common planning time. GET participants stated that they interacted with their mentors during the day. In contrast, SET participants interacted with their mentors before and after school or while co-teaching.

Research question four asked about obstacles that prevent effective mentoring of beginning teachers. Theme two, beginning teachers imitate to replicate the school culture, addressed this question. GET and SET participants described time as the primary obstacle that prevented interaction with their mentors. Other responsibilities trumped mentoring time. In particular, GET participants observed that although their schedule and their mentor’s schedule were not aligned, they were still able to interact during school hours. One GET participant
revealed that his mentor left the district, which left him without support and no opportunity for reciprocal learning. SET participants disclosed obstacles that prevented mentoring. SET participants had no prep time and managed a heavy case load, which edged out time with their mentors. Thus, SET participants interacted with their mentors before and after school or while co-teaching. For these reasons, SET participants experienced less mentoring than their GET counterparts.

Research question five was concerned with how mentors support beginning teachers. Theme two, beginning teachers imitate to replicate the school culture, addressed this question. GET and SET participants agreed on five characteristics of mentors: (a) model good instruction, (b) close proximity to mentee, (c) interact frequently, (d) collaborate by observing each other, sharing materials, ideas, answering questions, setting up classroom, and (e) plan together. In particular, GET participants appreciated that their mentors reviewed their lesson plans. In contrast, SET participants valued their mentors’ assistance to accomplish goals, consult with classroom teachers, and set up differentiated student programs. Some tasks were accomplished while GET and SET participants ate dinner and socialized with their mentors.

Research question six explored how school administrators support beginning teachers. Theme three, a mindset of support permeates the school culture, addressed this question. GET and SET participants disclosed that administrators created an inclusive work place where principals, the Special Education Coordinator, and other staff were approachable, responsive, kind, and friendly. They perceived that principals set expectations that were achievable, provided a mentor, and connected them to tools to assist with instruction. In contrast, principals could improve the work environment by reducing the workload, promoting socialization among all staff members, providing more observations and feedback, and assigning mentors to mentee
before school started.

Research question seven asked how the district mentoring program and coordinator support beginning teachers. Theme two, beginning teachers imitate to replicate the school culture, answered this question. During the interview, Vance, mentor coordinator, described his role as the central contact that answered questions, provided a Mentor Handbook, and coordinated the New Teacher Orientation Day. The program held mentors accountable to train their mentees. Thus, beginning teachers experienced a higher level of support today than when the program started a decade ago. To improve the program, Vance suggested an increase in the stipend.

During interviews, GET and SET participants agreed that monthly training meeting and New Teacher Orientation Day emphasized general education. Specifically, SET participants believed that the Special Education Coordinator and other specialists should attend the monthly training meeting and New Teacher Orientation Day to discuss relevant topics in the field of special education.

GET and SET mentors had multiple concerns. First, they desired formal training prior to pairing and monthly mentor meetings. Second, principals should make assignment of mentees before school starts. Third, SET mentors needed tools to get specialists assimilated quickly. Lastly, the Mentoring Handbook did not address special education.

**Discussion**

Mentoring is multi-dimensional. State and local policies, challenges of beginning teachers, role of principal, role of mentor, role of mentor coordinator, and other colleagues affected this school district’s mentoring program. Each dimension will be discussed and findings aligned with the literature.
This school district’s mentoring program was aligned with state policy and required (a) all beginning teachers and incoming teachers to have one year of support, (b) assignment of a mentor within the first two weeks of teaching, and (c) release time for mentor-mentee observations. In view of this state’s mentoring policy, principals confirmed that the school district had a two year mentoring program, whereby beginning GETs and SETs were matched with mentors based on subject area, specialty, and grade level. GET and SET participants corroborated they were matched with mentors by subject, specialty, and grade level. Research suggests that beginning SETs might not be assigned mentors due to lack of a match by subject area and grade level (Billingsley, Griffin, Smith, Kamman, & Israel, 2009). That was not the case in this particular school district. SET participants were assigned mentors in special education and within the same school. In a quantitative study, Perry (2011) investigated the influence of mentoring on beginning SETs and found that 81.4% had mentors in other schools and 57.9% had mentors who were not in the field of special education. Furthermore, the school district in this study paid mentors a stipend to reimburse them for time spent coaching, maintaining a log, and resolving problems of practice. Kamman and Long (2010) found that maintaining a log was a tool, which enabled mentors to document progress and objectively measure beginning teachers’ improvement over time.

GET and SET participants realized they had gaps in their preservice training due to scheduling conflicts while in college or starting a second career. Furthermore, these participants found certain classroom duties (e.g. lesson planning, creating tests, grading, and classroom management) left some beginning teachers feeling nervous and unsure of themselves. The findings of the present study agreed with recent research. Billingsley et al. (2009) found that novice teachers struggled with developing a routine, finding instructional materials, and
developing a classroom management plan, which left them feeling isolated and anxious. Furthermore, participants did not know whom to contact when mentor-mentee issues arose. They seemed fearful of not meeting principals’ expectations, which was corroborated in the literature. Research suggested that novice teachers are reluctant to ask for assistance for fear of receiving a poor performance appraisal (Billingsley et al., 2009; Perez-Gonzalez, 2011).

SET participants felt overwhelmed with their own set of unique challenges. These participants believed caseload, lack of knowledge of how to create individualized student programs, and how to prepare and read Individualized Education Plans were difficult to manage. To their credit, SET mentors worked with their mentees during school and after hours to address these issues. In a study of 18 beginning SETs across 12 states, Mehrenberg (2013) found that the majority of SET participants were overwhelmed with paperwork, which took too much time and lacked purpose. Natalie, SET mentor, said, “I would like to change the amount of paperwork that teachers have to do. I think that it’s redundant.” Eson-Brizo (2010) found that beginning SETs felt underpaid, micromanaged, and unappreciated. Gwen, SET participant, felt she was underpaid but welcomed by the principal and said:

I wish I could get paid a little bit more. It’s such a specialized, um, job. It takes me five hours to write a lesson plan for a substitute… It takes a lot of time. Sometimes I don’t leave here till 7 p.m. (Personal communication with participant, October, 2015)

Without a truthful conversation with her principal, he will never know about the challenges of SETs and how to provide a greater level of support.

Principals play a strategic role in the support of beginning teachers. Principals supported beginning teachers by treating them like family and encouraging teamwork. Research suggested that as teachers interact, a deeper sense of community evolves (Henley et al., 2010). GET and
SET participants described three types of support. First, participants felt they worked in an inclusive environment. Everyone was part of the same team. Hallam, Chou, Hite, and Hite (2012) argued that the primary role of principals was inclusion. Second, principals increased inclusion and participation by pairing beginning teachers with mentors (Correa & Wagner, 2011; Fick, 2011; Griffin, 2010, Roach, Smith, & Boutin, 2011). Third, GET and SET participants were thankful that their mentors were situated in the same building. Hallam et al. (2012) found that mentors situated in the same building provided better support than district-assigned mentors because of their close proximity, established friendships, and knowledge of the school’s culture and norms.

The role of principal is filled with multiple challenges. GET and SET participants perceived heavy workload hindered socialization, encouraged cliques, and prevented GET and SET participants from co-planning. Moreover, SET participants were overwhelmed with caseload and paperwork. Leko and Smith (2010) suggested that principals, who possess a high degree of emotional intelligence, will evaluate workload of beginning SETs and shift paperwork to other staff, which will free up time to co-plan. Likewise, SET participants divulged that administrators had difficulty hiring qualified SET substitutes so that they could attend professional development courses. Within an inclusive work environment, principals encouraged relationship-building, communication, co-planning (Henley et al., 2010), collegiality (Hallam et al., 2012), and professional development (Leko & Smith, 2010). In any school district, finding qualified SETs will likely be difficult. Professional development is the capstone of an inclusive work environment and increases pedagogy and sense of community (Leko & Smith, 2010). These challenges were aligned with previous research. They present opportunities for principals to consider, which may improve the work environment and increase beginning
teachers’ efficacy and commitment.

Veteran teachers were selected by principals to mentor beginning teachers. Gallagher, Abbott-Shim, and VandeWiele (2011) described mentors as veteran teachers who formed a joint venture with mentees to apply newly acquired knowledge. The high school principal emphasized that the purpose of mentoring was to nurture beginning teachers and reproduce the culture. McClelland (2009) posited that mentors and mentees formed a coalition to reproduce beliefs and values in mentees. Mentor participants reflected on their experiences as beginning teachers and wanted better experiences for their mentees. GET and SET participants described that mentors were in close proximity, met with them frequently and answered questions, invited them to their classroom to observe them, cared about their emotional wellness, shared ideas and materials, co-taught, and helped them accomplish goals. Furthermore, mentors encouraged mentees to reflect. One GET mentor said, “I want my mentee to reflect, but it is a difficult thing to teach.” Research suggested that reflection provides quality time to reminisce about one’s calling and to think of practical ways to improve practice (Hallam et al., 2012). In aggregate, these actions solidified the mentor-mentee relationship and agreed with recent research. Madigan and Scroth-Cavataio (2012) argued that effective mentors were accessible, listened, brainstormed strategies for mentees to implement, and worked together to resolve issues.

Two GETs and one SET, or three out of nine beginning teachers, were disappointed with the mentor-mentee relationship. These participants disclosed that their mentors were either unengaged or too controlling. To cope with incompatibility, participants turned to peers for guidance. One GET participant relied on his teacher learning community, whereas the SET participant asked for support from a SET colleague. Their actions confirmed previous research. Correa and Wagner (2011) found that beginning teachers turned to peers for guidance. If peers
fail them, beginning teachers left the profession prematurely. Mentees’ disappointment may be a function of no mentor training prior to pairing, and no ongoing training. Thus, mentors seemed unsure of their role and unaware of best practices. This gap in the district mentoring program is an opportunity for the mentor coordinator to address that could improve mentors’ and mentees’ satisfaction with the district mentoring program.

The mentor coordinator was the key player who kept the mentoring program running. The coordinator fielded questions, facilitated the monthly training meeting for beginning teachers, maintained the Mentoring Handbook, and organized the New Teacher Orientation Day. The primary finding was that monthly meetings for beginning teachers, Mentor Handbook, and Orientation Day had a general education slant. Secondarily, mentor participants suggested training prior to pairing with mentees and monthly meeting for mentors to discuss best practices. This finding revealed a weakness in the mentoring program and deviated from best practices evident in the literature. Gallagher et al. (2011) posited that mentor coordinators train potential mentors prior to pairing them with mentees. Research suggested that mentor coordinators discussed advantages and disadvantages of mentoring such as remuneration, power, influence, career satisfaction, and potential for dysfunction (Feldman, 1999; Scandura, 1998). Scandura (1998) argued that training does not refute the potential for dysfunctional relationships.

One SET participant disclosed a dysfunctional relationship with her mentor. This participant rejected her mentor’s beliefs and behavior. The mentor may have seen herself as a “gatekeeper” (McClelland, 2009, p. 63). Gatekeepers tend to believe that mentees should share their beliefs, values, and behavior (McClelland, 2009) and meet their expectations (Scandura, 1998). Thus, mentees may refuse to be influenced by their mentors and experience harsh treatment. This participant asked for support from another SET colleague to cope with the
incompatibility of her mentor. Overall, this issue could have been resolved if mentors were trained prior to pairing, and beginning teachers were instructed to discuss incompatibility issues with the mentor coordinator. The mentor coordinator role in the participating district will be vacated next school year. The newly appointed successor is an experienced mentor who participated in this study and would like feedback to improve the mentoring program.

Colleagues provided support to beginning teachers. Principals sent beginning teachers to colleagues’ classrooms to observe their teaching methods. One principal believed that beginning teachers should be exposed to a variety of methods of delivery. GET and SET participants disclosed that they asked colleagues for materials and advice so as not to monopolize their mentor’s time. Candice, GET participant, said, “Some teachers give me materials and asked if they can help me. I don’t think a mentor can do it all.” Colleagues informally mentored beginning teachers and assumed some of the responsibility of mentors. This finding agreed with previous research. Billingsley et al. (2009) argued that informal mentoring consisted of unannounced classroom visits, personal notes of affirmation, and shared teaching materials. Giving and receiving of notes of affirmation were not disclosed in the data, which may suggest a stressful work environment or that teachers may be highly task oriented.

GET and SET participants disclosed they were co-teaching with colleagues but did not have a common planning period. Co-teaching is an evidence-based strategy designed to improve efficacy and commitment to career. The lack of a common planning period deviated from the literature. “A common planning period with other colleagues or collaborating with other teachers on instruction increased the rate of retention of beginning teachers by more than 43%” (Jones, Youngs, & Frank, 2013, p. 368).

Not all mentoring programs are of the same quality. This school district’s mentoring
program was compared to the literature. High quality mentoring programs (a) train and develop mentors and mentees, (b) pair mentors and mentees with the same certification and school, (c) allow for common planning time, (d) provide for mentors and mentees to observe each other, (e) reduce workload of mentors and mentees, (f) engage a broad network of teachers, (g) assess mentees using formal standards, and (h) provide mentoring beyond three years (Andrews, Gilbert, & Martin, 2007; Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Washburn-Moses, 2010). The aforementioned attributes were evident in the school district’s mentoring program except for mentoring support beyond three years. This suggests that the school district may have a lean staff and may be unaware of the importance of support beyond the first two years. In view of the literature, the school district’s mentoring program has the potential to improve, which will likely have a positive effect on beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to career and school.

This study contributed to the literature by providing a direct comparison of the experiences of GET and SET participants using a phenomenological design. The major findings were that GET and SET participants had a shared language as they described their experiences. From there, GET and SET participants perceived an imbalance of time. GETs had prep time and interacted with mentors during the day. In contrast, SET participants did not have prep time and interacted with their mentors before and after school or while co-teaching. This suggests that SET mentees may have received less mentoring than their GET counterparts (Washburn-Moses, 2010). Future research is required to provide greater insight to this finding. Research suggests that mentoring support increased the likelihood of job satisfaction and reduced the risk of turnover of beginning teachers (Fisher & Ociepka, 2011).
Implications

Theoretical Implications

This study was supported by theories within the fields of psychology and education: four phases of mentoring (Kram, 1983), constructivism (Kolb, 1984), social learning theory (Kolb, 1984), efficacy theory (Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 1993), and affective event theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). In aggregate, these theories represent the foundation of mentoring theory and the basis for this study. Kram (1983) was one of the premier researchers to study mentoring and found that the mentor-mentee relationship consisted of four states. During the first state, initiation, (six to twelve months), novices evaluate their competencies and form relationships with mentors. During the second stage, cultivation, (two to five years), the mentor-mentee relationship peaks. Mentees gain practical experience and reconceptualize practice. During the third stage, separation (after five years), the mentor-mentee relationship is redefined. Mentees act independent of their mentors. During the last stage, redefinition, (more than five years), mentors and mentees interact informally and may continue their friendship.

Constructivism is based on the work of Piaget (1966) and Dewey (1938), which requires active involvement of learners to construct multiple realities. Because of a strong bond with a more experienced individual, the observer imitates the modeled behavior. Mentoring is grounded in a constructivist epistemology (Moss, 2010). As teachers interact with members of the learning community, new realities seem possible. Thus, school districts have implemented teacher learning communities to influence teachers’ learning, efficacy, and commitment (Hellsten, Prynula, Ebanks, & Lai, 2009).

Social learning theory (Kolb, 1984) is closely connected to constructivism and assumes that as an individual observes another person and reflects on past experiences, a learned response
occurs. Based on a strong bond with the experienced individual, the observer will imitate the modeled behavior (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning is a critical element of effective mentoring. Experienced teachers model behavior and encourage beginning teachers to apply new knowledge and skills to deliver instruction.

Efficacy Theory (Bandura 1989; Bandura 1993) influenced mentoring. Bandura found that people’s beliefs about their abilities to perform tasks and display certain behavior determined their level of motivation, effort, and action. In education, teachers’ efficacy refers to beliefs in their ability to deliver instruction and motivate students to learn. Efficacy beliefs influence whether or not beginning teachers will imitate the behavior of experienced teachers (Critchley & Gibbs, 2012).

Affective Event Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) connected environmental factors with perceptions about work. Research on mood and emotions suggested that time influenced people’s level of satisfaction and feelings about work. Fluctuation in mood and emotion impacted people’s attitude, behavior, and commitment to career (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). In that case, beginning teachers who had positive work experiences were likely to experience high efficacy and commitment to career. In contrast, beginning teachers who had negative work experiences were likely to experience low efficacy and lack commitment to career (Jones & Youngs, 2012).

The aforementioned theories were selected as the foundation of this study because the primary assumption of this research was that mentoring affected beginning teachers’ perceptions of their efficacy and commitment to career and school (Jones & Youngs, 2012). The present findings presented a rational explanation of the four phases of mentoring, constructivism, social learning theory, efficacy theory, and affective event theory. Regarding Kram’s (1983) four
phases of mentoring, the initiation phase was evident in the data. Eight out of nine GET and SET participants were assigned a mentor. Regrettably, one GET participant, a third year teacher, lost the mentor who transferred to another school district. To compensate, Edmund, GET participant, relied on his teacher learning community for support. Participants described how they were getting acquainted with their mentors and learning to trust them. Very soon after they entered the classroom, GET and SET participants realized they were not fully competent. They were dependent on their mentors for psychosocial support. This study confirmed Kram’s initial phase of mentoring.

A constructivist epistemology was apparent in the data. GET and SET participants disclosed that they were released from teaching periodically to observe their mentors and colleagues. The high school principal believed that observations enabled beginning teachers to see good instruction and flawless transitions from many teachers. He was convinced that there was no best way to deliver instruction, which enabled beginning teachers to feel less anxious and more confident of their delivery style.

Social learning theory is closely aligned with constructivism. As GETs and SETs observed their mentors and colleagues, they figured out how to apply what they learned to their classroom. Aaden, GET participant, asked for guidance from multiple colleagues and disclosed, “I find myself asking lots of different teachers the same questions so I can get multiple opinions. This has helped me figure out what type of teacher I want to be.” This evidence confirmed social theory was evident in the data.

Efficacy theory was manifest in the data. GET and SET participants believed they could acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to be fully competent in the classroom. Some participants were completing graduate school, which would professionalize their license, give
them more confidence, and put them on equal footing with veteran teachers. Other participants relied on their mentors for affirmation. During the focus group session, some participants described feeling nervous and unsure of the formal assessment looming in the future. Edmund, GET, voiced his opinion and suggested more observations, and Isabella, SET, believed that feedback on objectives would provide assurance that they were meeting expectations. Candice, GET, said, “I put one foot in front of the other and hope I am going to be successful.”

Affective event theory proposed that time influenced beginning teachers’ level of satisfaction and feelings about work. GET and SET participants described positive work experiences such as (a) mentor-mentee collaboration, (b) listening to paraprofessionals and students, (c) sharing materials and ideas, and (d) hearing encouraging words from mentors and administrators. These positive experiences suggested that GET and SET participants may have high levels of efficacy and commitment. Three participants, two GETs and one SET, described negative experiences. They used words such as “my mentor failed me,” “I view her [mentor] as an adversary,” “I feel like her [mentor] employee,” “alone and isolated,” “negativity,” and “tension in the environment.” These negative work experiences suggested that those GET and SET participants may have low levels of efficacy and commitment. These undesirable work experiences may have been mitigated by assigning mentees a compatible mentor, training mentors prior to assignment of a mentee, and providing ongoing mentor training. Because the study took place two months after school started, there was likely an insufficient amount of time for moods and emotions to stabilize. The findings confirmed the existence of affective event theory in the data.

**Empirical implications**

Previous studies of mentoring focused on mentoring of beginning teachers and
overlooked the contribution of principals, mentor coordinators, mentors, and colleagues (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009). In addition, the mentoring literature was void of a direct comparison of the experiences of GETs and SETs, and how mentoring impacted their efficacy and commitment (Jones et al., 2013). Furthermore, the mentoring literature seldom discussed the influence of school culture on beginning teacher’s efficacy (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009). To address the gaps in the literature, the present study compared the experiences of beginning GETs and SETs who were mentored, factors within the school district (e.g., principal, mentor coordinator, mentor), and characteristics of the teaching assignment.

Other mentoring literature described discontentment with mentoring, administrators, and the school culture, which hindered beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment. Not all beginning teachers had mentors (Washburn-Moses, 2010). Some SETs received less mentoring than GETs (Washburn-Moses, 2010). Furthermore, some beginning teachers were dissatisfied with the mentoring support they received (Dempsey & Carty, 2009). Other beginning teachers expressed dissatisfaction with school bureaucracy and lack of support from principals (O’Connor, Malow, & Bisland, 2011). Dissatisfaction, low efficacy beliefs (Fantilli & McDougal, 2009; Jones et al., 2013), and poor school climate (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009) predicted turnover among beginning teachers. The data revealed that all beginning teachers and transfers into the school district were assigned mentors, which complied with state mentoring policy. This study brought to light an imbalance of time for GETs and SETs. GETs had prep time and interacted with their mentors during the school day. SETs had no prep time and interacted with their mentors before and after school or while co-teaching. These findings suggest that SETs may experience less mentoring than their GET counterparts. The outcome of one qualitative study is inconclusive. A quantitative study may provide greater
visibility to actual time spent mentoring GETs as compared to SETs from logged minutes.

Six out of nine GET and SET participants were satisfied with the support from their mentors. In contrast, the remaining three GETs and SETs expressed dissatisfaction with the mentoring program and did not bring their issues to the attention of the mentor coordinator. GET and SET participants suggested greater support from principals in the form of school-wide socialization to reduce isolation, lower volume of work for beginning teachers taking graduate courses, and more observations and feedback on performance. One GET participant mentioned not knowing the proper form to check students out of class, which displeased the front office. This finding implied beginning teachers were challenged with school bureaucracy.

**Practical Implications**

**Recommendations for district administrators.** The district mentoring program has been part of school district’s culture for more than ten years and complied with the state’s mentoring policy. With a goal of continuous improvement, district administrators may want to consider instituting best practices mentioned in the literature and typical of high quality programs. The literature suggested mentoring support beyond three years (Andrews et al., 2007; Barrera et al., 2010; Washburn-Moses, 2010). Some school districts have implemented five-year induction programs intended to improve delivery of instruction, increase student performance, and retain beginning teachers (Kamman & Long, 2010). Principals disclosed beginning teachers were matched with mentors during the first year and sometimes into the second year. They may want to lengthen the time spent formally mentoring beginning teachers. In addition to extending the mentoring period, district administrators may want to consider increasing the stipend from $315 to $600 to align compensation with other school districts. These recommendations would improve the quality of the district’s mentoring program.
**Recommendations for Principals.** Within an inclusive school environment, principals support beginning teachers. As instructional leader, principals ensure teachers have sufficient time to collaborate and receive the proper amount of support to achieve school-wide goals (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2010; Leko & Smith, 2010). To that end, GET and SET participants recommended principals provide additional support by (a) organizing school-wide social events to reduce isolation and cliques; (b) reducing the work load of beginning teachers; especially those in graduate school; (c) aligning schedules to allow for GET and SET co-planning; (d) providing additional observations and timely feedback on performance; (e) shifting SET paperwork to other staff; (f) orienting beginning teachers to school procedures; (g) instituting SET prep time; and (h) aligning mentor and mentee schedules. The aforementioned recommendations will likely increase beginning teachers’ efficacy due to greater collaboration with peers and have a positive impact on retention.

**Recommendations for Mentor Coordinator.** The mentor coordinator is the primary administrator responsible for advocating for mentors and mentees, facilitating monthly training meetings, organizing the New Teacher Orientation Day, and maintaining the Mentoring Handbook. During interviews, participants recommended that monthly training meetings, New Teacher Orientation Day, and Mentoring Handbook specifically address the needs of beginning special education teachers and their mentors. For example, the Special Education Coordinator and other specialists should attend monthly training meetings and New Teacher Orientation Day and discuss pertinent issues and answer beginning teachers’ questions. Additionally, GET and SET mentors suggested training mentors prior to pairing with mentees and starting a mandatory mentor monthly training meeting to discuss best practices. In aggregate, recommendations for district administrators, principals, and the mentor coordinator will likely enhance beginning
teachers’ and mentors’ efficacy and satisfaction with the mentoring program.

**Limitations**

Inherent in this qualitative study were certain limitations. These characteristics affected the results of the study and limited the ability to generalize findings. Thus, the results may not be equally important to administrators and educational researchers beyond the scope of this study.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations affected the scope of the study. The researcher selected a school district that had a mentoring program in existence for more than 10 years. To be eligible for the study, participants met sampling criteria, which were aligned with research questions. Participants were in their first five years of service, which meant they had similar experiences, beliefs, and attitudes. The school district was located in a middle class, Caucasian suburb in the north eastern section of the United States. The sample size of 22 participants was aligned with the sample size of between 5 and 25 recommended for a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013).

The researcher assumed an axiological philosophy, which viewed participants’ experiences based on her values. Reality was viewed through a constructivist lens. A constructivist epistemology required participants to observe their mentor’s performance, reflect, and implement appropriate strategies in their classrooms. The study was framed in five theories from the fields of psychology and education because the literature lacked consensus on one specific framework. The researcher collected, organized, and analyzed data based on the seven steps described by Moustakas (1994). In aggregate, the aforementioned factors and philosophical framework limited the scope of the study. Thus, the results may not be generalizable to other regions on the country and other school districts with more diverse
populations.

Limitations

Limitations of the study revealed internal threats, which were overcome by the integration of various factors into the study’s design. The researcher chose a phenomenological design to address the purpose and problem of the study. The study was conducted by one researcher. To increase objectivity, study findings were externally audited and participants checked and confirmed their respective transcripts.

A further limitation of the study was time. The school district permitted the researcher to collect data at a single point in time, October. GET and SET participants were settling into the routine of school and getting acquainted with their mentors. Descriptions of participants’ experiences may have been different if data were collected in the spring semester. Thus, moods and emotions would have had additional time to stabilize.

The final limitation of this study was the researcher’s reliance on authentic responses from participants. The researcher was not employed by the school district nor interacted with district personnel, which increased the probability of truthful responses from participants. One out of eight mentor’s responses, however, diverged from their mentee’s responses, which called into question the integrity of the response. In aggregate, these factors limited the scope and generalizability of the study.

Delimitations and limitations were overcome by integrating the following elements into the design to increase the validity and reliability of the study. Credibility was achieved by prolonged interaction with participants, persistent observations, four data sources, and transcripts confirmed by participants. Transferability was realized by gathering detailed descriptions of participants’ experiences. Dependability was accomplished by keeping an audit trail in a
research journal, confirming transcripts with participants, and auditing findings by an independent third party. Conformability was realized through use of direct quotes and confirmation of transcripts by participants.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study focused on the impact of mentoring on K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their career and school and why SETs received less mentoring than their GET counterparts. Recommendations for future research were gleaned from the study’s findings and limitations. First, future researchers may want to replicate the design and collect data in the spring semester to overcome the time factor in this study. Thus, mentors and mentees would have had more time to bond, a greater number of experiences to draw from, and moods and emotions would likely have stabilized by the spring semester.

Second, a phenomenological study could be conducted to compare urban and suburban GETs and SETs who received mentoring support. Researchers will likely find larger discrepancies in beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to career and school. School culture may have a greater impact on beginning teachers’ perceptions.

Third, a quantitative study that used the same sample may provide greater insight to the impact mentoring had on beginning teachers’ level of satisfaction in year six of their teaching career. During year six, mentors and mentees are redefining their relationship (Kram, 1983) and emphasizing evidence-based strategies to increase student achievement (Kamman & Long, 2010). In addition, the study may choose to measure beginning teachers’ perception of mentoring and feelings about work at different points in time. Thus, researchers may want to determine to what extent mentoring is correlated with beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment.
Fourth, a quantitative study may provide a better comparison of GETs’ mentoring time versus SETs’ mentoring time. Washburn-Moses (2010) argued that SETs received less mentoring than GETs, which was supported by the findings of this study. Future studies may shed greater light on this study and corroborate the study’s tentative findings.

**Summary**

This phenomenological study was to compare the experiences of GETs with SETs in a school district in the north eastern section of the United States and explore the impact of mentoring on K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their career. To investigate this topic, the researcher followed a detailed plan. In Chapter One, the researcher described the problem, purpose, research questions, and plans to investigate the topic. In Chapter Two, a theoretical framework and review of the literature was provided. In Chapter Three, a detailed research design, data collection and analysis methodology, and validity and reliability measures were elucidated. In Chapter Four, the researcher discussed the textural and structural aspects of the findings along with substructures, which resulted in an overall essence of the experience. In the final chapter, the researcher critiqued methods and procedures, aligned the findings with the literature and theory and provided recommendations for future research.

There were five significant findings that emerged from the study. First, participants spoke a common language typical of districts that provide mentoring support and illustrated in the essence of mentoring, the flow effect: A culture of reciprocity. Second, time affected GETs’ and SETs’ perception of mentoring. Third, not all beginning teachers were satisfied with their mentoring experience. Fourth, the district could improve the mentoring program by training mentors. Lastly, the district could incorporate a special education perspective into beginning teacher monthly training meetings, New Teacher Orientation Day, and the Mentoring Handbook.
Beginning teachers are like lumps of clay on the potter's wheel that require molding and shaping (Jeremiah 18:1-6). Each lump has potential and unique characteristics, but all have imperfections and flaws, which must be smoothed out over time. As beginning teachers interact with mentors, gain experience, and acquire new skills, their relationship changes as they embrace different ways of thinking and behaving. Aaden summed up what it means to be a beginning teacher and said, “For 180 days a year and 42 minutes per class, I have the opportunity to mold and shape the minds of future generations.”
REFERENCES


http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep2802_3.


http://dx.doi.org/10.5840/ijap20092315


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APPENDIX A: CRITERION SURVEY

To participate in the study, please answer the following questions by highlighting your response. Type your name and date the form. If you are a general education teacher, please type “GET” after your name. Similarly, if you are a special education teacher, please type “SET” after your name. Please email the survey to Sandra Mozdzanowski at smozdzanowski@liberty.edu at your earliest convenience.

Question 1. Are you a beginning teacher with five or fewer years of experience? Yes or No

Question 2. Are you a first year teacher currently being mentored or have been mentored within the last five years? Yes or No

Question 3. Do you teach full or part time in the school district? Yes or No

Question 4. Are you a mentor, principal, or coordinator of mentoring who provides support to beginning teachers? Yes or No

Name:___________________________________________________ Date:________________
APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 26, 2015

Sandra K. Mozdzanowski
IRB Approval 2164.052615: Impact of Mentoring on K-12 Beginning Teachers' Efficacy and Commitment: A Comparative Phenomenological Study

Dear Sandra,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. 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

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1972
APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL OF REVISIONS

Mozdzanowski, Sandra Kay  UTCHQ

From: Mozdzanowski, Sandra <smozdzanowski@liberty.edu>
Sent: Sunday, February 07, 2016 6:00 PM
To: Mozdzanowski, Sandra Kay  UTCHQ
Attachments: Mozdanowski_2164CIPStampedConsent(Teachers).pdf
Categories: External, Orange Category

Sandra Mozdzanowski, ChFC

From: Mozdzanowski, Sandra Kay UTCHQ <sandra.mozdzanowski@UTC.COM>
Sent: Wednesday, September 16, 2015 12:35 PM
To: Mozdzanowski, Sandra
Subject: IRB Change in Protocol Approval: IRB Approval 2164.052615: Impact of Mentoring on K-12 Beginning Teachers’ Efficacy and Commitment: A Comparative Phenomenological Study

From: IRB, IRB [mailto:IRB@liberty.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, September 16, 2015 12:20 PM
To: Mozdzanowski, Sandra Kay UTCHQ
Cc: Lester, Kimberly (School of Education); IRB, IRB
Subject: [External] IRB Change in Protocol Approval: IRB Approval 2164.052615: Impact of Mentoring on K-12 Beginning Teachers’ Efficacy and Commitment: A Comparative Phenomenological Study

Good Afternoon Sandra,

This email is to inform you that your request to change the wording of your second teacher eligibility question from “Have you been mentored for at least one year?” to “Are you currently being mentored or have been mentored in the last five years?” has been approved. Thank you for submitting your revised teacher recruitment and consent documents for our review and documentation. Your stamped, revised teacher consent form is attached.

Thank you for complying with the IRB’s requirements for making changes to your approved study. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

We wish you well as you continue with your research.

Best,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
March 17, 2015

Ms. Sandra Mozdzanowski, Ed. S
22 Mulberry Street
Agawam, MA 01001

Dear Sandra,

Thank you for your recent submission entitled "Impact of Mentoring on K-12 Beginning Teachers' Efficacy and Commitment: A Comparative Phenomenological Study."

You have met our doctoral research requirements and we approve your request to start October 2015.

Good luck with your research.

Best Regards,

[Signature]

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Human Resources
During the past four years, I have been working on a doctorate in education at Liberty University and am working on the last two chapters of my dissertation entitled, "Impact of Mentoring on K-12 Beginning Teachers’ Efficacy and Commitment: A Comparative Phenomenological Study." On 5/26/15, I received IRB approval to collect data. The IRB committee asked that I pilot interview questions related to:

1) Beginning teachers (5 or fewer years of experience)  
2) Veteran teachers (more than 5 years of experience)  
3) Principal  
4) Mentor teacher

Please review the interview questions below and provide feedback via email at your earliest convenience:

**Interview Questions for Mentor**

1. What is your age, ethnicity, education level, and teaching position?
2. What does it mean to be a mentor of a beginning teacher? Rewarding knowing you are contributing to a person’s life and professional improvements.

3. What connections do you feel you have made with your mentee that enabled him/her to trust your judgment and respect your advice? Being realistic and honest in all aspects...

4. How do the strategies within the mentoring program support or hinder your support of your mentee? I would say that understanding of each other’s expectation goes a long way to provide support. I don’t expect any hindrances the program guidelines.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a mentor? The satisfaction I get knowing I am part of developing someone else’s life...

Interview Questions for Coordinator of Mentoring

1. What is your age, ethnicity, education level, and position?
2. What does it mean to be a mentor program coordinator?
3. How does the mentoring program support beginning teachers?
4. What are the criteria used to pair a mentor with a beginning teacher?
5. What training is provided to mentors and beginning teachers before being paired and during the mentoring relationship?
6. What improvements could be made to the mentoring program and your role?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as mentor program coordinator?

Thank you.

Sandra Mozdzanowski, ChFC
APPENDIX F: EMAIL TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Potential Research Participant:

As a graduate student in the Education Department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Education - Curriculum and Instruction to better understand the impact of mentoring on K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment. The purpose of my research is to compare the experiences of beginning teachers in general education and special education who receive mentoring. Specifically, I want to learn more about the challenges of beginning teachers, perception of peers, obstacles that hinder mentoring, and what types of support beginning teachers receive from their mentors, school administrators, and the coordinator of mentoring. Thus, I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

To participate in the study, you must meet the following requirements: (a) beginning teacher in general education or special education with five or fewer years of teaching experience, and (b) a year one teacher currently mentored or have been mentored within the last five years, and (c) teach full or part time, or (c) principal, mentor, or mentor coordinator who provides support to beginning teachers. If you are willing to participate, beginning teachers, principals, mentors, and coordinator of mentoring will be asked to participate in a private interview. Next, six beginning teachers will be invited to participate in a focus group. The interview and focus group should take approximately two hours of your time. Then, I will observe beginning teachers’ classrooms on five different days and during three mentoring sessions. Lastly, I will ask the mentor coordinator for a copy of the school district’s Mentoring Handbook. Your participation may occur before or after school hours at your convenience. You will also be given
the opportunity to review your transcript to verify its accuracy. Lastly, your participation will be completely anonymous, and no identifying information will be included in the final report.

To participate, please complete and return the attached consent document, criterion survey, and contact me to schedule an interview by emailing me at smozdzanowski@liberty.edu or calling my cell phone at (413) 531-8451. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and email it to me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Sandra Mozdzanowski

Liberty University Education Specialist
APPENDIX G: CONSENT FOR BEGINNING TEACHER

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from May 26, 2015 to May 25, 2016. Protocol # 2164.052615

Teacher Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study to enable the researcher to gain a better understanding of how mentoring impacts beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to their career. Specifically, you were selected as a potential participant because you are a beginning teacher in general education or special education with five or fewer years of teaching experience and work full or part time in the Agawam School District. Please read the form carefully and ask any questions before agreeing to participate in the study. This study is being conducted by Sandra Mozdzanowski in conjunction with Liberty University’s School of Education doctoral program.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to compare the experiences of K-12 beginning teachers and understand how mentoring impacts efficacy and commitment to school and career. In addition, the study will examine factors within the school (principal, mentor, and coordinator of mentoring) and other characteristics that impact beginning teachers. Teacher attrition is a major problem in the United States and the cost to replace beginning teachers is alarming.

To participate in the study, you must answer the following survey: Question (1) Are you a beginning teacher with five or fewer years of experience?, Question (2) Are you a first year teacher currently being mentored or have been mentored within the last five years?, and Question (3) Do you teach full or part time in the Agawam School District. Please complete Criterion Survey Form and return to researcher via email. If you answer in the affirmative to all three questions, you will subsequently be asked to participate in an in-depth audio-recorded interview that will take approximately one hour. Based on responses to interview questions, six beginning teachers will be asked to attend a focus group, which will last approximately one hour. Next, I
will observe you participating in three mentor and mentee coaching sessions and take reflective notes. Then, on five different days, I will enter your classroom for one hour and observe you teaching and interacting with students. Interviews, coaching sessions, and focus group notes will be transcribed, coded, and analyzed. No more than the risk typically associated with everyday life will be associated with this study. There are no direct benefits of participation beyond the satisfaction of having contributed to current research in the field.

The data collected from this study will be kept private. Field records will be stored in a secure location on a password-protected, backed-up computer. Furthermore, your responses to interview questions and focus group session will be kept confidential. The final report will not include information that will make it possible to identify you.

Participation in the study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not impact your relationship with me, Liberty University, or your school. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without harming those relationships. You may decide to withdraw your consent at any time. If you decide to withdraw, you may do so by emailing Sandra Mozdzanowski at smozdzanowski@liberty.edu. Any audio-recordings you participated in will be erased at the time of your withdrawal from the study.

If you have questions, feel free to contact Sandra Mozdzanowski at (413) 531-8451 (cell) or Dr. Kimberly Lester, faculty advisor, at klester@liberty.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email irb@liberty.edu. You will be given a signed copy of this form. I have read and understood the above information, and consent to participate in audio-recorded
interviews, focus group, and observations.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Your signature: _________________________________ Date: _______________________

Your name (printed): ________________________________

Email address: ________________________________
APPENDIX H: CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPAL

Principal Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study to enable the researcher to gain a better understanding of how mentoring impacts beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to school and career. Specifically, you were selected as a potential participant because you provide support to beginning teachers. Please read the form carefully and ask any questions before agreeing to participate in the study. This study is being conducted by Sandra Mozdzanowski in conjunction with Liberty University’s School of Education doctoral program.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to compare the experiences of beginning teachers and understand how mentoring impacts K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to school and career. In addition, the study will examine factors within the school (principal, mentor, and coordinator of mentoring) and other characteristics that impact beginning teachers. Teacher attrition is a major problem in the United States and the cost to replace beginning teachers is alarming.

To participate in the study, you must answer the following survey question: Do you provide support of beginning teachers in general education or special education? Please complete Criterion Survey Form and return to researcher via email. If you answer in the affirmative, you will subsequently be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview that will take approximately one hour. Lastly, you will be asked to provide the researcher with copies of the school’s mentoring policy, goals, and objectives.

No more than the risk typically associated with everyday life will be associated with this study. There are no direct benefits of participation beyond the satisfaction of having contributed to current research.

The data collected from this study will be kept private. Field records will be stored in a secure location on a password-protected, backed-up computer. Furthermore, responses to
interview questions will be kept confidential. The final report will not include information that will make it possible to identify you.

Participation in the study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not impact your relationship with me, Liberty University, or the school district. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without harming those relationships. You may decide to withdraw your consent at any time. If you decide to withdraw, you may do so by emailing Sandra Mozdzanowski at smozdzanowski@liberty.edu. Any audio-recordings you participated in will be erased at the time of your withdrawal from the study.

If you have questions, feel free to contact Sandra Mozdzanowski at (413) 531-8451 (cell), Dr. Kimberly Lester, faculty advisor, at kblester@liberty.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu. You will be given a signed copy of this form. I have read and understood the above information, and consent to participate in audio-recorded interviews, focus group, and observations.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Your signature: _______________________________ Date: ______________

Your name (printed): _______________________________

Email address: _______________________________
APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM FOR MENTOR COORDINATOR

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from May 26, 2015 to May 25, 2016 Protocol # 2164.052015

Coordinator of Mentoring Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study to enable the researcher to gain a better understanding of how mentoring impacts beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to school and career. Specifically, you were selected as a possible participant because you coordinate the school district’s mentoring program for beginning teachers. Please read the form carefully and ask any questions before agreeing to participate in the study. This study is being conducted by Sandra Mozdzanowski in conjunction with Liberty University’s School of Education doctoral program.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to compare the experiences of beginning teachers and understand how mentoring impacts K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to school and career. In addition, the study will examine factors within the school (principal, mentor, and coordinator of mentoring) and other characteristics that impact beginning teachers. Teacher attrition is a major problem in the United States and the cost to replace beginning teachers is alarming.

To participate in the study, you must answer the following survey question: Do you coordinate the school district’s mentoring program? Please complete Criterion Survey Form and return to researcher via email. If you answer in the affirmative, you will subsequently be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview that will take approximately one hour. No more than the risk typically associated with everyday life will be associated with this study. There are no direct benefits of participation beyond the satisfaction of having contributed to current research.

The data collected from this study will be kept private. Field records will be stored in a secure location on a password-protected, backed-up computer. Furthermore, responses to interview questions will be kept confidential. The final report will not include information that
will make it possible to identify you.

Participation in the study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not impact your relationship with me, Liberty University, or the school district. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without harming those relationships. You may decide to withdraw your consent at any time. If you decide to withdraw, you may do so by emailing Sandra Mozdzanowski at smozdzanowski@ liberty.edu. Any audio-recordings you participated in will be erased at the time of your withdrawal from the study.

If you have questions, feel free to contact Sandra Mozdzanowski at (413) 531-8451 (cell), Dr. Kimberly Lester, faculty advisor, at klester@liberty.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu. You will be given a signed copy of this form. I have read and understood the above information, and consent to participate in audio-recorded interviews, focus group, and observations.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Your signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________

Your name (printed): _________________________________

Email address: _________________________________
APPENDIX J: CONSENT FORM FOR MENTORS

Mentor Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study to enable the researcher to gain a better understanding of how mentoring impacts beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to school and career. Specifically, you were selected as a potential participant because you provide mentoring support to beginning teachers. Please read the form carefully and ask any questions before agreeing to participate in the study. This study is being conducted by Sandra Mozdzanowski in conjunction with Liberty University’s School of Education doctoral program.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to compare the experiences of beginning teachers and understand how mentoring impacts K-12 beginning teachers’ efficacy and commitment to school and career. In addition, the study will examine factors within the school (principal, mentor, and coordinator of mentoring) and other characteristics that impact beginning teachers. Teacher attrition is a major problem in the United States and the cost to replace beginning teachers is alarming.

To participate in the study, you must answer the following survey question: Do you provide mentoring support to beginning teachers in general education or special education? Please complete Criterion Survey Form and return to researcher via email. If you answer in the affirmative, you will subsequently be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview that will take approximately one hour. No more than the risk typically associated with everyday life will be associated with this study. There are no direct benefits of participation beyond the satisfaction of having contributed to current research.

The data collected from this study will be kept private. Field records will be stored in a secure location on a password-protected, backed-up computer. Furthermore, responses to interview questions will be kept confidential. The final report will not include information that will make it possible to identify you.
Participation in the study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not impact your relationship with me, Liberty University, or the school. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without harming those relationships. You may decide to withdraw your consent at any time. If you decide to withdraw, you may do so by emailing Sandra Mozdzanowski at smozdzanowski@liberty.edu. Any audio-recordings you participated in will be erased at the time of your withdrawal from the study.

If you have questions, feel free to contact Sandra Mozdzanowski at (413) 531-8451 (cell), Dr. Kimberly Lester, faculty advisor, at klester@liberty.edu, or Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, at fgarzonirb@liberty.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu. You will be given a signed copy of this form. I have read and understood the above information, and consent to participate in audio-recorded interviews, focus group, and observations.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Your signature: __________________________________________ Date: ________________

Your name (printed): __________________________________________

Email address: ________________________________________________
APPENDIX K: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS

1. What is your age, ethnicity, education level, and teaching position?

2. What does it mean to be a beginning teacher?

3. What are the challenges of your first year as a beginning teacher?

4. What strategies do you use to cope with challenges in your classroom?

5. How would you describe the school environment in which you work?

6. What connections do you feel your mentor has made with you that increased or decreased your level of trust and respect for his/her advice?

7. How do the strategies within the mentoring program support or hinder you?

8. How do school administrators and peers support your needs as a beginning teacher?

9. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a beginning teacher?
APPENDIX L: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MENTORS

1. What is your age, ethnicity, education level, and teaching position?

2. What does it mean to be a mentor of a beginning teacher?

3. What connections do you feel you have made with your mentee that enabled him/her to trust your judgment and respect your advice?

4. How do the strategies within the mentoring program support or hinder your support of your mentee?

5. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a mentor?
APPENDIX M: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MENTOR COORDINATOR

1. What is your age, ethnicity, education level, and position?
2. What does it mean to be a mentor program coordinator?
3. How does the mentoring program support beginning teachers?
4. What are the criteria used to pair a mentor with a beginning teacher?
5. What training is provided to mentors and beginning teachers before being paired and during the mentoring relationship?
6. What improvements could be made to the mentoring program and your role?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as mentor program coordinator?
APPENDIX N: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

1. What is your age, ethnicity, education level, and position?

2. How do school policies support beginning teachers?

3. What criteria do you use to select mentors and pair them with beginning teachers?

4. What strategies do you use to support beginning teachers?

5. What are some outcomes of mentoring of beginning teachers in your school?

6. How does the school support the district’s mentoring program?

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as principal of this school?
APPENDIX O: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

As the researcher, I assumed the role of a nonparticipant observer as I observed each beginning teacher’s classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBSERVATION PROTOCOL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:                Site:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Time:      Ending Time:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity:            Participants:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Summary
APPENDIX P: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

Dalton, Beginning Teacher, Middle School, Music

I – Interviewer

B – Beginning teacher

I – What is your age, ethnicity, education level, and teaching position?

B – Uh, I am 29, white, um, I just completed my masters, and am a general education teacher at the middle school. I teach music and school chorus.

I – What does it mean to be a beginning teacher?

B – I’d say to be a beginning teacher there is all teaching type of things where you’re getting to know your kids. You’re getting to know what their background experiences are. For me teaching music, their personal experiences with music and how they make meaning. You’re getting to know their strengths, where they need to grow, what their entry points are, ah, and that’s pretty much the teaching end. Your curriculum ties into all of that, um, and obviously and all the um, educational demands that go with it. When you are a beginning teacher, you must learn the catch phrases of a particular place and how things are run there. The unspoken rules, the order of who do I talk to first, and what are the general politics of the building or the district.

I – What are the challenges of your first year as a beginning teacher because you were in your 5th year

B – Yes, my previous inner city school district was very challenging. Um, in this particular district, so many challenges are dealing with a large population of students with different background experiences with music, very different socio economic status, um, and some very different experiences in terms of what they might have the opportunity to do at home. Um, so
there aren’t a lot of different entry points and what are meaningful music experiences wasn’t there. And, then, in terms of the ecological challenges, I think being a first year teacher has meant a lot of classroom management. I think a lot about what, you know, what is my grading policy going to look like, anything about professional relationships, how are the connections and, you think about um. Also I think about the politics of the building, too. You know, what do they expect from you? What do they want, um, you know, ah, from a first year teacher? How does this principal prioritize things in the next month? That’s, like, the first thing to know.

I – What strategies do you use to cope with challenges in your classroom?

B – Um, in my very first district that I was teaching in, um, it was kind of like, hush hush around the building. Like, “You’ve got a particular person as your mentor” because he wasn’t particularly strong in the classroom. Um, he was an older teacher. He was very different from me as a teacher, however, I felt that he was a great sounding board for the ideas I had and where I had a lot of things I wanted and that he wanted to have necessarily done. I’d like to try doing this and that. He was a great sounding board. You know, I had to watch out for specific challenges on particular projects. So, I found out that he was very savvy. And, in terms of how he dealt with politics, this guy as second to none. He was, um, fantastic. I did not know how to navigate and start some programs that he did in that district. With his, um, assistance, I learned how to frame things and how to make it look nice and how to sell something. Um, and those programs grew tremendously since I was there. I really attributed it to a lot of support from the mentor. Um, for instance ah, there was, ah, we needed to find a way to get chorus into the school district because it did not exist. They wanted to put it before school or after school and he was very helpful in crafting the argument as to why this needed to happen during the school day
and what would be the best way to sell it to this particular principal based on what they wanted to hear. How do I sell it to my colleagues, you know, most of them were on board with it or how do I get them to see the connections and why this is beneficial for them too and being one to re-work the schedule, um. My mentor was very helpful with this type of thing.

I – How would you describe the school environment in which you work?

B – It is drastically different from my previous urban school district. Um, the first thing I’ve noticed in this district is the difference in top-down support in a way that um, I truly feel as though there aren’t folks out to get me but that support me and want what is best for the kids and understand that um, that comes through me and through supporting me. And, so I believe, I hear teachers all the time in this particular district saying, “I feel supported as a teacher.” The way I look at it is I see the administrators and staff supporting the kids, especially as a music teacher. I see they want the kids to have a meaningful experience and so that comes through me and that’s important it comes through me for those kids. Um, that’s the main difference and the school environment that I see as far as the kids go. At middle school, I’ve seen kids who are hungry for um, music education. They are quick to want to impress and um, for instance, this year the chorus had a huge sign-up, triple what I thought it would be, and so I feel as though, um, we are seeing kids who are very hungry for solid music education and that is my mission. That is, I want to say that I deliver my absolute best to these kids.

I – What connections do you feel your mentor has made with you that increased or decreased your level of trust and respect for his/her advice?

B – Watching him teach um, I see that he, um, he is a well-rounded teacher who knows what he is doing. And so in terms of how he is an educator, I can bounce ideas off of him. I feel that he responds, um, I don’t feel like he is going to beat around the bush, um, you know, um, I think
watching him interact with the kids tells me that he has a good grasp on what they can and can’t do, what their entry points are, how to motivate them and lots of types of information that I need to be successful. I learned that my mentor’s opinion is important to the administrators. They listen to him; they want to know what he thinks. So, on the political end, I feel that as I ask him “how is it going to be” or “how are things” how about if I talk about this or how do I approach this type of thing, he has an opinion that is respected and um, and is trustworthy.

I – How do the strategies within the mentoring program support or hinder you?

B – The strategy is perfect. I mean his office is right next to mine. He’s right there and in the same building. Ah, we can bounce ideas off each other constantly. Whatever I need to know; he is right there. I don’t think the structure could be set up any better for me.

I – How do school administrators and peers support your needs as a beginning teacher?

B – As a beginning teacher in this position, um, I have been able to approach my principal, ask questions, and get answers quickly. Um, I was a little bit worried about the difference in lesson planning, the structure of that. Um, I was a little bit worried about, um, policy, coming in and being different and that also in terms on the administrative end, the department head, the music I was curious about the school’s computer system, how the department was structured, um, you know, ah, from all of that. I got positive feedback on the work that I was doing with the lesson plans. Um, I think it is mainly for me about access to them. They just made themselves accessible and for that, it was positive feedback, and they are, you know, happy with what they are seeing.

I – Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a beginning teacher?

B – I think what comes into play with this new job, I personally didn’t like the way things ended with the old position, um, the political changes in this district this year. It was difficult to make
the switch from the urban school. Um, I truly enjoyed working with those kids; however, it was also pretty much a huge downer. I was in a key aide position where I was teaching 8 classes a day. Now, I teach 5 or 6 classes a day. And so, in our personal lives, I came into the school year really trying to think about my 2-year old daughter, um, and I want to ultimately have a balance to work and, um, family time. And this beginning teacher thing, I am still working on balance in my life. I have not explicitly talked about those things yet with my mentor. Explicit connections between work and home kinda take care of themselves. So that is a discussion I’m interested in having with my mentor, too.

I – Thank you for allowing me to interview you today.
APPENDIX Q: CODED HORIZONS

ORIGINAL CODES FOR HORIZONS AND SIGNIFICANT STATEMENT CLUSTERS

1. Characteristics of beginning teachers
2. Gaps in preservice training
3. Challenges of beginning teachers
4. Differences in perception of GETs and SETs
5. Strategies to overcome beginning teacher challenges
6. Characteristics of mentor-mentee reciprocal relationship
7. Challenges of the mentoring process
8. Role of mentor coordinator
9. Characteristics of mentors
10. Suggestions for mentor coordinator
11. Beginning teachers perception of support received from principal
12. Principal's perception of support given to beginning teachers
13. Challenges faced by principals
14. Suggestions for principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS</th>
<th>CODE 1-14</th>
<th>THEME 1-3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GET: I have an opportunity to shape and mold the minds of our future generation.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: I have a lot of passion and energy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: It means learning from and observing other teachers; learning from mistakes you've made and getting better every year.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: An opportunity to contribute to society and to the</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
next generation; hopefully, to inspire my students.

GET: Learning, um, the catch phrases of a particular place and how things are run there. The unspoken laws of who to talk to, and what are the general politics of the building.

GET: He is amazed how engaged students are in the suburbs and how unengaged students are in the inner city where he used to teach. He attributed high engagement to suburban parents supporting their kids academically and exposing them to fine arts.

GET: His mentor left the school district so he feels alone and isolated. The principal did not assign him to another mentor.

GET: Even in her 5th year of teacher, she feels like a 1st year teacher due to transferring to this school district.

GET: Teachers who love to convey concepts will inspire students to learn as they model a love for knowledge.

Observation of beginning GET: Teachers are kind and respectful to students.

GET: I received no actual training in classroom management in my undergraduate studies.

GET: As a second career teacher, I lack pedagogical training.

GET: College courses in my major prevented me from taking an abundance of education courses.

SET: To me it means you need a lot of support. I feel supported.
here because teachers want to help you.

| SET: Starting out it has been hard but very rewarding to push kids to their independence and hold them to higher expectations than they have been expected to accomplish in the past. | 1 | 1 |
| SET: Getting to know the ropes, and um, needing to work on all the new skills. | 3 | 1 |
| SET: It means a constant challenge to learn new things, learning new skills, bettering myself, learning from others, impacting the lives of my students and seeing their improvements. | 3 | 1 |
| SET: The biggest gap is differentiation of instruction. | 2 | 1 |
| SET: Preservice training prepares you for multiple settings: medical or educational | 2 | 1 |
| SET: How to apply broad knowledge to my specific setting is my biggest challenge. | 2 | 1 |
| SET: As a student, they never prepare you for the case load you will have in the real world. | 2 | 1 |
| GET: Taking theory of education and applying those theories to a real classroom. | 3 | 1 |
| GET: Learning to adapt and cope with the rigors of the job: teaching five classes a day for five days a week. | 3 | 1 |
| GET: I did not feel support at first and discovered teaching to be a surprisingly isolating experience | 7 | 2 |
| GET: There is so much to do on your own, um, I would have really enjoyed more contemplating time with my mentor. I would have enjoyed more direction and check ins. | 7 | 2 |
| GET: The lack of support and lack of, um, help made me who I am today. | 7 | 2 |
| GET: I’d say transitioning, learning routines of the school, and just making sure you are following all the guidelines correctly. | 3 | 1 |
| GET: Time management, preparation to have several items ready to keep kids attention, grading, preparing IEPs, posting assignments online, and concentrating on the lesson plans are examples of my challenges. | 3 | 1 |
| GET: First year teachers deal with a lot of classroom management, grading, professional relationships, and politics of the building. | 3 | 1 |
| GET: It is easy to burn out as a new teacher. You must learn to manage your time. | 3 | 1 |
| GET: I am most surprised how difficult and tough the first five years are and that starting at a new school is almost like starting all over again. | 3 | 1 |
| GET: I think for a new teacher, you have to make time to exercise and do other things. | 3 | 1 |
| GET: I am learning to balance work and, um, family time. | 3 | 1 |
| GET: On Mondays, I got home from grad school after leaving everything on my desk at school, put a can of soup on the stove, turned on the TV, and was sleeping by 8 p.m. | 3 | 1 |
| GET: I am in a grad school program. So after I graduate, I could probably see myself managing things a bit better. | 3 | 1 |
| GET: I stay after school till 5 p.m. and take stuff home to correct. It is a very long day. | 3 | 1 |
GET: There is a stigma in teaching that you are going to do everything for students. You have to have boundaries.

SET: You have to have a life or you will burn out. You have to put limits on what you can and cannot do. You must realize, “if I am behind, I will catch up, cut corners, and work smarter.”

GET: I had a mentor but she was not there every day, every moment, to answer my questions so that was the most challenging piece.

SET: What wasn’t I challenged in. Planning was hard, assessments were extremely hard, and I really did not have anyone to ask questions. So planning for all students as well as their IEP was absolutely a challenge.

SET: The challenges were the unknown. To think that I would know what needed to be done. I found out along the way, which made it a little difficult.

SET: I shifted from general education to special education, which is a learning experience: How to write IEP reports and attend a lot more meetings.

GET: Getting to know teachers and the students IEPs is a lot of additional work for me.

GET: This school district seems so organized. We can enroll in professional development and grow professionally.

SET: I have 11 students from pre-primer to 12th grade and five paraprofessionals. I hope I don’t burn out. It is exhausting yet very rewarding. I wish I could get paid a little bit more.
<p>| Mentor of GET: I suggest more guidelines and more check ins as a group, which could include mentors. It would be nice to have a checklist to go over with new teachers. | 10 | 2 |
| SET: I think I am built for this job—with or without a mentor. | 1 | 1 |
| SET: I am floating with a life saver in one arm. | 3 | 1 |
| SET: I am still alive. | 3 | 1 |
| SET: I recommend a new hire special education orientation or monthly meeting where somebody representing specialists talk to the group. | 10 | 2 |
| SET: My mentor and I spent the first three weekends, all day Saturday and Sunday, putting together student programs. There is no way to know what you need to do without the support of a mentor. The hours that you put in as a new teacher are exhausting. | 3 | 1 |
| SET: I am always nervous that I will miss something, miss a deadline on testing, miss a meeting, or do something wrong. As nervousness starts to diminish, my efficacy will increase. So, I think time and becoming more comfortable will improve my confidence. | 3 | 1 |
| GET: I rely on advice from my colleagues. | 5 | 1 |
| GET: I am one of the fastest to come down on students that are aggressive. | 5 | 1 |
| GET: I began to listen and work with students. | 5 | 1 |
| GET: They realize that I’m fair and encourage freed to choose the right thing. I commend those who do the right thing. | 5 | 1 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GET:</th>
<th>I go online and look up different websites that might have tips on teaching.</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GET:</td>
<td>The first thing I do is to appeal to the class like they are adults and ask them to treat classmates and me with respect.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET:</td>
<td>Give students a little attention.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET:</td>
<td>I pause and kinda wait for them to get quiet.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET:</td>
<td>I like to have a little bit of a sense of humor.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET:</td>
<td>I attribute a lot to the guidance of my mentor.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET:</td>
<td>I have student sheriff who keeps an eye on things.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET:</td>
<td>I am very well organized.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET:</td>
<td>A classroom management plan helps me to cope with challenges in my classroom.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET:</td>
<td>I am co-teaching right now. There is a special educator and regular educator in the classroom. I think the hardest part is finding time to have common planning time, which we really do not have.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET:</td>
<td>I would say, keeping cool. Ya know, I don’t really show much emotion. I just de-stress after school and get my work done after hours.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET:</td>
<td>When I get home, I exercise</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET:</td>
<td>I try to surround myself with positive people</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET:</td>
<td>My mentor has been great. We meet pretty much every morning to discuss challenges and I am having.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SET: I just try to listen to my staff and the kids so they don’t get frustrated with me and I don’t get frustrated with them.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GET: When I hear that special education teachers do not have prep time, oh my, I need my prep time. I just think that is not a good thing. So, teachers working conditions affect efficacy and commitment. I view this first year as my boot camp. I still need time to exercise. I already gained weight since I started. I am so tired.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SET: As special education teachers, we do not have prep time. However, general education teachers have prep time while kids are at recess, gym, and music. We need to play the hand we are dealt to get the job done properly.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET: I do not have prep time. I can ask my mentor questions before and after school.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET: As a beginning SET, I am co-teaching with a GET right now. I think the hardest part is finding time to have common planning time, which we really do not have.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor to SET: We had formalized check ins once a month but we talk just about every day. I stop by her room in the morning and see how she is doing.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor to GET: Beginning teachers attend a new teacher monthly meeting. I find that it is advantageous for the mentor to attend as well so he/she knows what the mentee is being advised on by the mentor coordinator.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mentors are given a copy of the agenda so they know what they will discuss.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor to SET: My mentee and I co-teach in the same classroom so I am available to her at all times.</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GET: What I really like about teaching is the kids, helping them grow, and ya know, working with them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: If you are not in it for the kids, what are you here for?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: Education is a very creative and rewarding profession. We are educating kids.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET: The students—even the smallest bit of growth or skills acquired. Regardless of how crazy or disheveled you feel leaving school, there are at least 10 positive things to take away from the day. Today I saw tears of joy from a mother. Just to see that I can make a difference. We do make a difference—to see growth in students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET: We do it for the kids and we are the voice of the kids. I love going into the classroom and helping the teacher with speech and language support.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: I want more observations. I very rarely, um, hear about what I am doing well and what I should keep doing.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get: In terms of commitment, I cannot see myself doing anything else. In terms of efficacy, I feel very confident in what I want to do with my curriculum. I feel very confident in how to engage kids and get really exciting things going. I think that lack of efficacy comes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from administrative issues from things going on at the state level, and the evaluation system. As time goes by and you are doing it more and more, it starts to get easier. You get more confident. There will always be some crazy new state-level initiative. Over time, you may start to feel less and less connected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GET: If you can master technology, it can really help you. I think you can set up procedures so that you know what you are doing.</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GET: Having achievable and realistic goals affects the way you evaluate things.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET: I feel like I am gasping for breath at all times but I am surviving. I want to continue to get the training and professional development needed as the district provides the coverage for my classroom.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: We share a room and spend lots of time talking about school and non-school things</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: My mentor did not help me. She did not stop by and see how I was doing.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: She texted me outside of work and asked how I’m feeling or made a phone call to me just to make me feel good or just to see how work went that day. She made sure that I’m all set up every day and I know the routines.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: She sat down with me to parse out the lesson plan and gave me a book to read.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: Watching him, um, I see he is a well-rounded teacher who knows what he is doing. I bounce ideas off of him and</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: The monthly training session strategies help mainly because they give you a contact person that you can go to when things are not going well.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: I like the monthly meeting, the videos, being able to talk to other people, and when the lawyer came in and gave us specific advice and explained the contract.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: It has been a team working together sharing materials.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: She (mentor) spends time with me going over things with me.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: His (mentor) office is right next to mine. He is in the same building. We can bounce ideas off each other constantly. Whatever I need to know, he is right there.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: To be able to share my knowledge with someone new to the profession or building. It is nice to help them develop professionally and work through mundane pieces of the job.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET Mentor: I had a wonderful mentor who provided emotional support, um, to bounce ideas off her and have them validated. I want to be able to give that experience to somebody else.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET Mentor: I can have a hand in helping to grow another person’s craft.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET Mentor: I told my mentee he can observe me teach any time. He’s observed how I handle classroom management. We meet daily because we share the same classroom and same</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
prep time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GET: Over the summer, we got together a couple of times. She asked questions about the school, curriculum, and classroom. We come to school one hour early to plan lessons together. I have been there, you know, as a support system.</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GET Mentor: I think she (mentee) respects me (mentor). She (mentee) watched me teach but there are moments she does not listen to me because she’s distracted by something else that she feels pressed to do.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET Mentor: It is important to have an open relationship…make sure the mentee knows you’re not doing evaluations. You are there to provide support, to guide, to answer questions, and make the transition easy.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET Mentor: I think that new teachers should be assigned to a mentor as soon as they’re hired. So they can meet in the summer. I think that is huge for retention of teachers.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET Mentor: I found out a couple days into the school year that I was going to be a mentor. It would have been nice to find out sooner. We could have a mentor training session to understand expectations.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET Mentor: The mentoring program has not offered any real advice for the mentor.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET Mentor: I did not find out that I was going to mentor my mentee until school started. I would have been nice to get together before school started to get acquainted and talk about the</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
curriculum. Lastly, I want training on how to be a mentor and meet as a group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GET Mentor: I think it is great that we have a mentoring program.</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation of mentor of a beginning GET: Mentor has 14 years of experience. He has learned who the school’s power brokers are and how to address administrators to achieve goals. Because his mentor taught at another school, he wants a better experience for his mentee</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of mentor of a beginning GET: Mentor wants mentor training class and earlier match with mentee to get acquainted before school starts</td>
<td>10,14</td>
<td>2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of mentor of a beginning GET: Mentor wants mentor training class and earlier match with mentee to get acquainted before school starts</td>
<td>10,14</td>
<td>2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: I need to know the proper form to sign kids out for extra help and has not been addressed by my mentor.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: I feel nervous about not knowing how to read an IEP, which has not been addressed by my mentor.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: My mentor has not addressed IEP accommodations. How do I accommodate for a kid who is struggling?</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET: My mentor is also a speech and language pathologist who has been in the building for many years. So I connect with her because we have the same background.</td>
<td>6,9</td>
<td>2,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET: She was the first one that I met and I got a lot of negative</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
feedback from my mentor. So I do not feel supported. But other teachers stepped up. I found other teachers who would assist me. My mentor failed me.

| SET: She contacts me a lot so that makes me feel like I can trust her. Sometimes I get outside information that makes me second guess what she is telling me. If I have a question, I’ll ask her as opposed to her needed to talk to me. I feel like I need to go to another source to get another answer to make sure my question is answered. | 7 | 2 |
| SET: From the day I was hired, she like welcomed me with open arms. I met at her house numerous times and had dinner as we were doing work, you know, setting up student programs. So just the fact that she took the time out of school hours to meet with me to make sure that I understood what I needed to do made it easier for both of us. She just showed compassion, caring, and interest in helping me. | 6,9 | 2,2 |
| SET: Sometimes I’ll go and observe my mentor because I might be struggling with the co-teaching methodology. We are in the same office every day sitting next to each other. | 6 | 2 |
| SET: We had monthly meetings for new teachers. It was great to see other teachers. As a special education teacher, I couldn’t get much out of the meetings. There was nobody to confide in nobody to relate to. | 10 | 2 |
| SET: The monthly meetings were helpful because they focused on one topic. At the | 8 | 2 |
end, they were totally open to questions.

| SET: The monthly meetings are helpful so we can get together and share ideas. I feel like I don’t get as much out of those meetings as I do with the individual time with my mentor.                        | 10 | 2 |
| SET Mentor: I get to spend a year with a teacher helping her understand what needs to be done…as far as grading, record keeping, lesson planning, and other responsibilities. | 6  | 2 |
| SET Mentor: A mentor means teaching and showing them the ropes of what education is all about…to learn how to consult or collaborate with classroom teachers. | 6  | 2 |
| SET Mentor: I am showing a young occupational therapist what I have learned.                                      | 6  | 2 |
| SET Mentor: It is essential to train new teachers coming in on how to use Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) teaching methodology. | 6  | 2 |
| SET Mentor: I helped her set up her room, deal with paraprofessionals, set up the differentiated programs for the students, and answered her questions. | 6  | 2 |
| SET Mentor: My job is to make my mentee feel very comfortable, to explain the process, and work together to meet students’ needs. | 6  | 2 |
| SET Mentor: I showed her around and introduced her to people. Um, I gave her information from my own packet to help her get up and running. | 6  | 2 |
| SET Mentor: I learned from new teachers’ suggestions and shared | 6  | 2 |
my ideas.

| SET Mentor: I mentored beginning teachers twice and know what it is like to participate in special education programs. I can provide support that the mentee may not receive from another mentor. | 6 | 2 |
| SET Mentor: We talk about anything. | 6 | 2 |
| SET Mentor: It is good for administrators to know who is acting as a mentor. They are available to provide support. | 6 | 2 |
| Observation of mentor of a beginning SET: Mentoring relationship goes really well or very poorly. One SET was very disappointed in the mentor’s lack of support. Based on interview with SET’s mentor, just the opposite was said. The mentor mentioned the time, care, and support invested in the relationship. | 7 | 2 |
| Observation of mentor of a beginning SET: The volume of work requires time management skills | 3 | 1 |
| Observation of mentor of a beginning SET: Mentor mentioned that “it was very important to look beyond the student’s deficits and learn from the child. Learning is a two-way street. The student is learning from the teacher and the teacher is learning from the child.” | 6 | 2 |
| Observation of mentor of a beginning SET: Mentor mentioned “it was important to model correct behavior so that the mentee can observe how things should be done.” | 6 | 2 |
| Observation of mentor of a beginning SET: Mentor | 3 | 1 |
mentioned “it was important to be on guard and watch for burn out due to lack of sufficient time to meet students’ needs.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation of mentor of a beginning SET: Giving clear directions, patience, and rapport with students are key attributes of a good SET.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation of beginning SETs: Working with students with special needs requires a special instructor who is patient, empathetic, kind, and loves interacting with students in the special education program. Maybe these students will not achieve what other students achieve academically but they will excel in other ways. I was so touched by a SET’s patience and positive attitude while instructing a fourth grader with Down Syndrome, the experience brought tears to my eyes.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of beginning SETs: Due to incompatibility, can a beginning SET request a new mentor. As a first year teacher, there seems to be shyness and reluctance to discuss the issue with the principal.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SET: We need a seminar on how to write IEPs and legal assessments</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SET: I struggle with how to document Medicaid in an online format and enter my SMART goals. I have not received the proper training.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal: Mentors help mentees with procedures…so they do not get caught not knowing something.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal: Mentees go into the classroom and observe their mentors…to see flawless transitions.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal: Mentoring is a kind of safeguard for the new teacher. It is about keeping them on and not letting them go.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal: Usually, pretty good matches are made. Often, long term relationships develop as a result of the mentor-mentee experience.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: Students and teachers have a healthy respect for each other.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: I’d say it is isolating, um, there’s a lot of stress.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: Everyone feels like they got a lot of work to do.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: There’s not a lot of socializing going on and it’s very cliquey.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: My team is there for me whenever I have any questions.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: Everybody’s a part of the team from secretary to custodian to bus driver to teacher. I feel like everyone’s working together. It’s a team effort.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: In this district, there is top-down support. There aren’t folks out to get me but who support me and want what is best for the kids.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: I feel supported as a teacher.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: You’re walking on egg shells.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: Administrators and colleagues support me by making me feel part of the team. They ask for my input during meetings and are always willing to answer questions.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET: Administrators are always willing to help with classroom</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
management, providing materials, technological support, and finding curriculum.

GET: She (administrator) comes across in a very non-threatening manner and she is there to support me. If I needed anything, I’d never be afraid to ask. So I guess, just supportive.

GET: My principal sat down with me and went over the additional things I have to do and how it is working with my mentor. He also wanted to know in what way he could support me or offer help in a particular category. Also, the IT Department is fantastic, friendly, and responds to emails.

GET: I have been able to approach my principal, ask questions, and get answers quickly. I receive positive feedback on the work I was doing with lesson plans.

GET: I need a second prep time. We do not get enough time to adequately prepare. Due to earning a master’s degree, I stay till five or six o’clock some nights, which is taking a major toll on me both socially and emotionally. There is nothing quite as depressing as going in at dawn and leaving after dusk. It really kills your motivation.

GET: I think the biggest support that needs to happen is setting clear goals that are achievable.

GET: There has to be a lot of dialogue about realistic goals.

SET: I feel supported and welcomed by the veteran teachers.

SET: People just really want to help you because they want you
to stay. They want you to like it here. They want you to succeed. I feel that they have a lot of accountability in place and that is what helps the teachers keep improving their teaching methods and their students’ progress.

| SET: I love the school environment. The environment is by far the best, with a great, positive, and supportive administration. | 11 | 3 |
| SET: It makes me feel like we’re welcome. We’re actually a part of the school and we’re a very central part of the school. Ya know, the principal will wait in the morning to say Hi to my kids. Um, other students ask to take my kids to lunch and sit with their friends. We’re very much a part of this school. | 11 | 3 |
| SET: The faculty and staff have been really nice. | 11 | 3 |
| SET: I love this school. I love the people. I felt like family from the day I started and I still have that feeling now. | 11 | 3 |
| SET: It is nice to have two administrators in the building: a principal and administrator of special education. If I have a question about special education, I’ll email her and she’ll respond. I have a principal who helps me with daily stuff in the building. I feel supported in different ways. | 11 | 3 |
| SET: I had administrators coming in on the first, second, and third days of school and say, “Hey, how are you, I want to introduce myself, how did you do, do you like it here?” That was huge. They even remembered my name. Teachers | 11,7 | 3,2 |
and staff were very welcoming and open to answering my questions. My mentor was invisible but the administration was extremely supportive.

| SET: The principal called me into her office and wanted to know if I had any questions. She ran through the flow of things and gave me other people to go to if I had questions. She was extremely helpful. |
|---|---|---|
| 11 | 3 |

| SET: Every time I walk into the building, peers and administrators are asking, “How is your day, is there anything we can do?” They are willing to help me with any questions I have. |
|---|---|---|
| 11 | 3 |

| SET: We need prep time and more feedback from the evaluator throughout the entire process. Feedback on whether goals are aligned with objectives. |
|---|---|---|
| 13,14 | 3,3 |

| Principal: Teachers meet with their mentor teacher upon entering the school. We match them up pretty closely with content or specialty area. If I have a new teacher, I look to a teacher that is going to be a good fit to help nurture them in their teaching career for the first and second year. On a monthly basis, the new teachers meet with others and receive formal training. |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | 3 |

| Principal: New teachers are assigned a mentor who meets with the beginning teacher. The mentor keeps a log of when they meet and discuss issues of concern. |
|---|---|---|
| 6 | 3 |

| Principal: All beginning teachers are required to attend monthly |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | 3 |
meetings. They have a paid mentor who meets with them and keeps a log of discussions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal: Every new teacher has an assigned mentor. The mentor may go in and do some observations. Likewise, the mentee may go in and observe the mentor’s classroom. The mentee attends monthly meetings for one year. Mentor support goes on for the first and second year.</th>
<th>12</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal: Mentors must have at least three years of experience, personality matched, and be someone who believes in our school culture. After interviewing the new teacher, I assign them a mentor.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal: If possible, I match based on grade level and content area. I try to find someone that is going to have the time, um, the desire to mentor and, um, support the beginning teacher.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal: We match someone up to the new teacher who has over three years of experience and who has a similar position.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal: I pair them up with somebody at the same grade level or content area, personable, and knowledgeable about the position.</td>
<td>12</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal: I meet with new teachers and let me know what the evaluation process is like, and uh, try to make them relaxed and know that we’re in this together. I have a lot to lose if I lose them. There is one formal evaluation where I go into the classroom for an extended period of time. I look at their lesson plans and everything dealing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>
with the lesson. Otherwise I go in unannounced and stay for 10, 15, or 20 minutes.

| Principal: I ensure that our administration stay in touch with the new teachers, you know, check in with them from time to time. Find out if they have any, um, specific needs or areas of concern. Let them know that if there are any resources that they feel they need, please see me so that we can order any materials. I try to make them feel supported. I try to make them feel welcome, and part of our staff. I try to treat them on a personal level as well as a professional level. | 12 | 3 |
| Principal: We support them with buying supplies and with the mentoring program. | 12 | 3 |
| Principal: I personally meet with them about my expectations around goal setting. I am careful with selecting my mentors and making sure the relationship is going well and they are getting what they need. Anything that I can do to support them, I do it. | 12 | 3 |
| Principal: Mentors help new teachers with procedures so they do not get caught not knowing something. | 6 | 3 |
| Principal: We host events for the beginning teacher. The mentor coordinator resides in the school so I have some input. | 12 | 3 |
| Principal: Regarding mentoring, we adhere to all of the guidelines and expectations set by the district. When we hire, we think who might be a good match for the new hire. | 12 | 3 |
| Principal: We have mentors on site who do the same job as the | 12 | 3 |
newly hired teacher

| Principal: We have a mentor coordinator who touches base in the summer and finds out who is new, who needs a mentor, and who might be a good mentor for the new hire. The new hire attends monthly district meetings. | 12 | 3 |
| Principal: It really helps quite a bit to have someone there to really look out for you. | 12 | 3 |
| Principal: A formal mentoring program ensures that the right things are happening and the right matches are going on according to who the teachers are, what they are teaching, and consider their personality. | 12 | 3 |
| Principal: In their first and second year, it is the survival questions that new teachers are most concerned with quite often. I always try to get to know them, and get them in the building before they actually start to teach. | 12 | 3 |
| Principal: I think we support our teachers very well. I think that it’s not just a matter of mentoring teachers. It is mentoring new administrators too. I had a mentor when I started so it’s a philosophy that we believe in and it works. | 12 | 3 |

Mentor Coordinator: It is to be a central contact so mentors can contact me if they have questions. I coordinate things.

| Mentor Coordinator: We have a New Teacher Orientation Day where we give new hires all the stuff that they really need to know administratively. The first mentoring meeting for mentees is in mid-September. The | 8 | 2 |
mentoring program relies on the mentor getting out there and providing the new teacher what he/she needs.

| Mentor Coordinator: We pair a mentor with a mentee either by grade level or by specialty. | 8 | 2 |
| Mentor Coordinator: Regarding training of mentors and beginning teachers before being paired, we do not provide any training. We have a Mentor Handbook that goes through a lot of suggestions, provides a checklist of what to do, and suggestions on how to help the teacher. Lastly, I provide a document on, um, confidentiality, which is the biggest concern that mentors have. | 8,10 | 2,2 |
| Mentor Coordinator: We could restructure the mentor position. We pay $315/year to mentor a beginning teacher. Most other districts pay $600-$650. We offer release time for mentees and mentors who are teachers but very few people take advantage of that. Even training for mentors but there isn’t enough excitement for it. Some districts have full time mentors. One mentor could cover three or four grades or one teacher cover science and math. | 10 | 2 |
| Mentor Coordinator: As coordinator, I really enjoy the monthly meetings. I get to spend one-on-one time with beginning teachers. We are doing a classroom management presentation at our first meeting. We find out what teachers are doing, how the year is going, and does anybody have any | 10,14 | 2,3 |
problems. This year, mentors were assigned in September because the district wanted to post the mentor position, which pays a stipend. I think the whole process needs to happen earlier.

Mentor Coordinator: I believe teachers should be 30 years old before they enter the classroom. At that age, they have acquired wisdom and practical work experience to amplify their lesson.

**GET:** I attended monthly training where we discussed current issues in education, saw training videos, and listened to a speaker who told us about our rights. Other than that, I received support from my mentor who helped me set up my classroom and did occasional check ins to make sure I was on top of grading and planning.

**GET:** You go to monthly meetings, ask questions, and receive guidance. There is mentor support regarding protocol, routines, check ins, and receive a high five and question on how it is going.

**SET:** The monthly meetings are important. It is nice to have a district mentor to contact with questions; a liaison to go to if your mentor can’t answer the question. Getting to know other teachers within the district as a sounding board is important. My mentor is a great friend, both
workwise and socially, to share daily successes and struggles with her.

| SET: My mentor is a speech and language pathologist who shares a room with me. She is very helpful. I think who your mentor is should be driven by what curriculum you teach, your grade, and your subject matter. | 6.9 | 2.2 |
From:

Sent: Sunday, February 07, 2016 2:57 PM

To: Mozdzanowski, Sandra Kay UTCHQ

Subject: [External] Re: Audit Chap 4: Findings aligned with Data

Hi Sandra,

I spent quite some time looking at this, and I really wouldn't change a thing: I am quite confident that the findings align with the data. Nice work!

P.S. I am so proud of you.

Regards,

On Monday, February 1, 2016 7:20 PM, "Mozdzanowski, Sandra Kay UTCHQ"

<writemail>sandra.mozdzanowski@UTC.COM</writemail> wrote:

Hi,

Please audit Chapter 4 starting on page 83. Determine if findings are aligned with the data. Send me an email stating your findings.

Thank you.

Sandra Mozdzanowski, ChFC
APPENDIX S: MEMBER CHECK EMAIL

From: Mozdzanowski, Sandra smożdzanowski@liberty.edu
Sent: Saturday, January 09, 2016 9:41 PM
To: 
Subject: Dissertation and Transcribed Interview - Response Requested

Dissertation Participant,

As part of my research design, you are welcome to review the transcribed interview and provide feedback. If you choose not to review the transcription, there is no further action required.

To review the transcript, please provide your private email address so I can email you the transcript and you can respond accordingly:

Interview transcript was accurate:
  * Agree
  * Disagree

Other comments:

Thank you.

Sandra Mozdzanowski, ChFC