A CASE STUDY OF THE STAKEHOLDERS’ PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A SOUTH CAROLINA DISTRICT MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

by

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Liberty University

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

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study is to understand the perceptions of participants in St. John’s County School District concerning the effectiveness of the mentorship program in the county. The Theory of Teacher Development (Fuller, 1969; Katz, 1972) guided the research. This theory states the induction programs should follow pre-service preparation, which will reduce the teacher attrition rate. A single case study was chosen so that the mentorship program could be studied using the perceptions of the participants in the program. The two research questions that guided the study is as follows: “What are the beginning teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?” and “What are the participating mentors’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?” The sample size included 15 individuals including beginning teachers and mentors participating in the program. The data for the study was collected using interviews, observations, and journal entries that the participants made during the study, and the examination of documents by me concerning the mentorship program. The setting was 6 schools throughout the district depending on the number of volunteers. Beginning teachers are defined as teachers with 0-2 years’ experience in the district. The mentors were those actively involved in the program who were assisting these beginning teachers. The data was collected at the site where the individuals were employed. The data was analyzed using the Moustakas’ (1994) Phenomenological Methods-coding, categorizing, and making sense of essential meanings of the phenomena.

Keywords: Beginning or induction teachers, mentors, mentorship programs, perception, teacher attrition.
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my two children, Renee and James “Jimmy.” I could not have completed it without your unconditional support and unwavering faith in me. I thank you for encouraging me throughout this entire process. You both were my inspiration, my driving force when I would falter, and my strength when I had no more to give. I have always tried to install in you to always do your best and never quit. I had to follow my own advice many times throughout this journey. “I can do all things through Christ who gives me the strength” (Philippians 4:13, NIV).

To my Dad, who was always my role model, I love and miss you and hope you are proud of me.

To the memory of Butch, who started this journey with me.

To all the other members of my family, thank you for being my support system. There were many times when I wanted to give up, but your encouragement kept me going!
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I would first and foremost like to acknowledge my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. For without His support, guidance, and example and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, I could never have accomplished this goal. I would like to thank my chairperson, Dr. Lucas, who guided me through this process and was my stability when things got rough. And, to the other members of my committee, Dr. Harrison and Dr. Smith, who believed in me and pointed me in the right direction. It was through the expertise of my entire committee that I was able to accomplish this arduous task.

I would like to acknowledge the support of my family and friends who were my cheerleaders throughout this course. Renee, James, Kelli, Brian, Blake, Layla, and Brynlee, it is because of you that I was able to accomplish this goal.

I would also like to thank Dr. Bournias for her encouragement throughout this process.

I would like to also thank Drs. Carolyn and William Moore for your special help and reassurance.

A special thank you to Harry for listening to me during those times of anxiety and stress and pushing me toward the finish line. Your patience was amazing.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1, ESV).
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List of Abbreviations

Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT)
Bilingual Education (BLE)
Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA)
Division of Education Quality and Leadership (DEQ)
English as a Second Language (ESL)
Education Value-added Assessment System (EVAAS)
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Measure of Academic Progress (MAP)
National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)
No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
New Teacher Center (NTC)
Professional Learning Communities (PLC)
South Carolina Information Highway (SCIH)
Student Learning Objective (SLO)
Summative ADEPT Formative Evaluation of Classroom Based Teachers (SAFE-T)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this case study is to examine the perceptions of beginning teachers and mentors in St. John’s County School District concerning the effectiveness of the mentorship program in the county. This chapter gives the background of the problem and provides the situation to self. Also included is the problem statement, the purpose statement of the research, and the significance of the study. The research questions provide the focus of the study. The definitions of important terms are also included. The results of this study give insight into the successes and shortcomings of the mentorship program.

Background

Historical

During the year 2008, the number of students and the number of teachers increased dramatically throughout the nation (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). However, according to the same report, the teaching force slowly but steadily became less stable in recent years. For instance, “from 1988-89 to 2008-09, annual attrition from the teaching force rose by 41%, from 6.4% to 9%” (p. 23). This issue of teacher retention is an important issue that alarms many of the educational facilities throughout the nation. Early attrition from the teaching profession is a major factor behind the shortages of teachers, but it is often overlooked (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014). Although all professions experience some form of attrition, the teaching field seems to have an increasing rate of attrition, exhibiting high levels of teacher shortages (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004).

Regardless of the preparation pathway, teachers need continued support to ensure that all students have the opportunity to meet the expectations of rigorous standards. Mentorship
programs are important in shaping and developing the next generation of teachers, particularly as expectations for students become more rigorous (New Teacher Center [NTC], n.d., p. 2).

Teacher shortages is an increasing problem facing both the district of St. John’s and the state of South Carolina, and the increasing size of the student population only contributes to this problem. According to the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA, 2015),

of those [teachers] who left during or after the 2013-14 school year, 33% did so in the first five years of their career and 13% after just one year or less in the classroom. These figures rose from 30% and 11% last year, and this trend continues to negatively impact districts, schools and, more importantly, students. (p.4)

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, n.d.) shows the student enrollment in the state of South Carolina has increased 2.7% from 2006 to 2011. The projected growth of students for 2011-2023 is 6.0%. According to the South Carolina Information Highway (SCIH, 2015), the projected population growth for 2025 in this county is expected to be 202,000, showing a 25% increase in population for the county from 2015-2025.

The mentorship program of St. John’s County was established in 2007 with the teacher attrition rate of 15%. The rate of attrition showed a gradual decrease showing that the goals of the program may have been attained. However, according to CERRA (2015), the attrition rate had dramatically increased to 13%, cited as the highest in the state for 2015. Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks, and Lai (2009) put the emphasis of their study on the overwhelming challenges and workloads that teachers face and the feelings of isolation that many times these beginning teachers have. “Many beginning teachers report an inability to cope and described feelings of being isolated as well as frustrated, anxious, demoralized, and overwhelmed by the challenges of
the profession” (Hellsten et al., 2009, p. 1). The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of the participants concerning the mentorship program and provide some insight into the rising teacher attrition rate in the county.

Social

Because of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002, teachers in the current education system must be adequately prepared to meet these requirements. According to the NCLB Act (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.):

The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. The purpose can be accomplished by: ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned with challenging state academic standards so that students, teachers, parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement. (p. 1)

According to Ross and Lignugaris-Kraft (2015), the supply of quality, effective teachers is increasing; however, the problem is becoming how to retain these educators. Teachers are often required to go from colleges and universities directly into the classroom with little or no support. Ingersoll found the major failure in retaining teachers is that the teachers, when entering the classrooms, are isolated and unsupported (Ingersoll, Alsalam, Quinn, & Bobbitt, 1997). This feeling of isolation is difficult for beginning teachers and many times, they have feelings of “being lost at sea, or in a sink or swim experience. Many newcomers often end up in the most difficult classroom and school assignments leaving them in a ‘trial by fire’ experience”
With so many teachers coming from such a variety of teacher preparation programs, it is difficult to be certain the teachers hired in a school system are prepared for the task before them. Ingersoll (2012) stated that,

> Both elementary and secondary teaching involves intensive interaction with youngsters, but the work of teachers is done largely in isolation from colleagues. This isolation can be especially difficult for newcomers, who upon accepting a position in a school, are frequently left to succeed or fail on their own within the confines of their classrooms. (p. 1)

Many university programs prepare teachers for most of the duties they will soon face in the classroom; beginning teachers face many situations for which they are unprepared for in their teacher preparation program (Armstrong, 2011). Teacher mentoring programs have been developed to try to support beginning teachers in this critical time of their professional development. Mentoring is defined by Kutsyuruba, Godden, and Tregumna (2014) as a program to provide beginning teachers with a coach trainer, a positive role model, a developer of talent, an opener of doors, a protector, a sponsor, and a successful leader. According to Armstrong (2011), some of the qualities of effective mentors include good attitude and character, professional competence and experience, good communication skills, and the ability to maintain a trusting professional relationship. Even though there are a number of teacher mentorship programs in many school districts across the country, the question is whether these programs are achieving the results they had intended, particularly the district program that was studied.

**Theoretical**

Many mentorship programs are based upon the theory of teacher development proposed by Katz (1972) and Fuller (1969). This theory states that induction or mentorship programs
should follow pre-service preparation, which will ultimately improve teacher practices and teacher retention, and improve student learning and growth. Teacher turnover is a major barrier to student successes in school districts (Bland, Church, & Mingchu, 2014). The perceptions of beginning teachers and mentors provided an insight into some of the causes of this high attrition rate.

Mentorship programs designed according to this theory not only affect the retention rate of the teachers that are present in the classroom but also affect those who will be the recipient of these experiences—the students. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) studied the effects of teacher induction on student achievement. The results of this study were particularly interesting since the goal of teaching should be successful students. “Almost all the studies showed that students of beginning teachers who participated in induction had higher scores, or gains, on academic achievement tests” (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, p. 1). Ingersoll found a link between beginning teachers’ preparation and support and the rate of retention, but he also noted that the strength of the effect was based upon the type and number of support systems that the beginning teachers received (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014).

These programs are also based, many times, on the adult learning theory. According to Kenner and Weinerman (2011), the adult learning theory focuses on characteristics of this unique population of learners—the adults. According to the theory, these adult learners are usually self-directed because they already want to succeed. They take responsibility for their actions. As adults, they are ready to learn and ready to become successful teachers.

Administrators can also benefit in many ways by supporting teacher mentorship programs (Kutsyuruba et al., 2014). Teacher turnover rates impose a burden on the school administrators. The size of new teaching candidate pools is becoming increasingly smaller;
administrators must find, train, and mentor new teachers from this dwindling resource (Lee, 2016). This can involve much time from the administrator, taxing the already small amount of time that the administrator has available.

Basing this study on the theory of teacher development and the adult learning theory provided me with a clear and concise guide with which to compare the results of this study. This study also provided new information concerning the effectiveness of the mentorship program from the perceptions of the participants.

**Situation to Self**

When I was employed by this county, I was required to participate in the mentorship program because it was my first year as a teacher in the district. I had an outstanding mentor and enjoyed the mentorship experience. The following year I was asked to participate in the program as a mentor. I gladly accepted and began my journey into the program. I enjoyed working with beginning teachers for two years, but some of the other beginning teachers expressed to me that they did not feel prepared to be successful in the classroom. Since my experience was beneficial, I began to wonder what the difference was in my perceptions of the program and their perception. I wanted to understand the negative aspects of the other teachers’ perceptions and investigate what could be done to change their negative perceptions. I have a real passion for helping these beginning teachers because I believe that students deserve to have quality teachers teaching them in their classrooms. I also believe that most teachers want to be successful in the classroom and can be with the proper training and guidance. I wanted to know what aspects of the program were and which were not being successful. This was the beginning of my interest in researching the mentorship programs in my county, along with investigating the perceptions of the stakeholders involved in the program.
I approached this study with an epistemological approach. Creswell (2013) stated that in an epistemological study, “the researcher tries to get as close as possible to the participants being studied” (p. 20). By using observations as one of my methods of data collection, I ascertained firsthand what the beginning teachers experience concerning the interaction with their mentor. This approach allowed me to interact with both the mentor and the beginning teacher.

The paradigm that guided the study was social constructivism. This paradigm “seeks understanding of the world in which the individuals live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). The goal of my research was to rely on the participants’ views of the situation. I looked for a pattern of meaning that the participants perceived concerning the mentorship program. The reality of the situation was formed by the individual perceptions of the program. I obtained these perceptions through the interviews, observations, and journal writing of the participants and by examination of the documents of the mentorship program itself.

As a Christian, God has called me to be a leader in this area of education. I have been involved in women’s ministry in my church for many years and have always felt that God has called me to mentor women of God. Being in a public-school setting, I am not always able to share openly my personal relationship with my Lord and Savior. However, just as Jesus led by example, I also want to be able to disciple quality, dedicated teachers and let the light of Jesus Christ shine through my life. I also believe that Jesus demonstrated what a true mentor should be when He called His disciples to be disciplined learners by following His example. Mark 1:17 says, “Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men’” (ESV). Jesus lived His life as an example for all humanity to show them what a true believer should be. He is the ultimate mentor.
Problem Statement

CERRA is the oldest and most established teacher recruitment program in the country. According to CERRA (2015), the teacher attrition rate in St. John’s County was at 13% during the 2015-16 school year, one of the highest rates in the state of South Carolina. Also, according to CERRA, the rate of attrition in 2007 was 15%. This was the year that the district mentorship program was established. Though the district mentorship program has been in existence for at least 10 years, the district’s teacher attrition rate has not changed very much.

“As early as the 1970’s, teacher attrition was recognized as a major problem affecting the education system. It is estimated that during a given year, 33% of all beginning teachers leave the field for a variety of reasons” (Daugherty, 2010, p. 3). Teacher attrition in the first five years of employment, decrease of students’ scores on achievement tests, feelings of isolation and abandonment by beginning teachers, and overall lack of support are the reasons that the district established this program (Mentoring Program Guide, 2014). Langdon, Alexander, Dinsmore, and Ryde (2012) found that the mentoring of new teachers is a critical part of the development of beginning teachers so that they will become quality teachers. Kang and Berliner (2012) stated that activities such as induction programs greatly influence the attrition rate, causing a reduction in the rate. Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2014) indicated in their study “the differences in education and teacher preparation were significantly related to the degree to which teachers are leaving teaching” (p. 29). Nallaya (2016) also indicated that involvement in a mentoring program facilitated new teachers’ development. Many studies have been done on teacher mentorship programs; however, the problem is that this district program has not done an in-depth study since its inception in 2007. This study offers an extensive understanding of the mentorship
program using the perceptions of individuals that are involved in the program and examines the possibility of lowering the attrition rates in the county.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this case study is to understand the perceptions of the effectiveness of St. John’s County’s mentorship program according to the participants in the program. The perceptions of the beginning teachers and mentors provided some insight into the reason why teachers leave the teaching profession, specifically in the studied district. The perceptions of the individuals involved in the program were determined from the interviews, observations, and journaling pieces that the participants provided. A careful study of the program’s documents (handbook, which includes purpose of program, district team contacts, all forms necessary for program, and sample of evaluation forms) were also included which allowed for a complete understanding of the purpose of the program. Fifteen participants, including beginning teachers and mentors, were used. Beginning teachers were defined as teachers who had 0-2 years’ experience in the district. Mentors were those individuals who were participating in the program as a mentor to the beginning teachers. Guiding this research was the theory of teacher development (Fuller, 1969; Katz, 1972). This theory states that induction or mentorship programs should follow pre-service preparation, which will increase teacher retention. The theory shows that teacher support is an important component of teacher mentoring process (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012). The mentoring of new teachers is a critical part of the development of beginning teachers so that they will become quality teachers (Langdon et al., 2012). Activities, such as induction programs, will greatly influence the rate of teacher turnover, causing a reduction in the attrition rate (Kang & Berliner, 2012). The mentorship programs offer guidance to beginning teachers as they construct their own teaching strategies, classroom
management skills, and many other skills thus helping them to become more successful teachers (Kessels, 2010). This theory clearly shows the support that mentorship programs provide is an important component of teacher preparation and support. Similarities and differences in the perceptions of the individuals participating in the program are reported.

**Significance of Study**

Teacher retention, student achievement, production of quality teachers, and productive teacher collaboration are all goals of many school districts, including the studied district. The practical significance of this study is that by investigating the perceptions of the participants of this district mentorship program, it should provide information concerning the effectiveness of the program and if the goals of the program are being met. Kutsyuruba, Godden, and Tregunna stated that “as teachers’ quality and abilities are the most significant school-based factors contributing to student achievement and educational improvement, much attention is given to the development of novice teachers” (Kutsyuruba et al., 2014). Quality teacher mentorship programs can help achieve these goals. Studies have shown that quality mentorship programs are assets to a beginning teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom (Rideout & Windler, 2010). This study revealed the effectiveness of this program.

The empirical significance of this study is that this district has not studied nor reevaluated its mentorship program since its inception in 2007. The information gathered from this study provided additional information concerning not only this mentorship program, but also gave more information and insight into other district programs. Martinez-Aguido (2016) stated that learning to teach comes from direct experiences. The skills that the mentors provide for their beginning teacher are the best type of training. However, to provide appropriate training, a mentor and a mentorship program must remain current and aware of the latest trends in
education. Schools are becoming more complex, and the expectations of teaching is becoming increasingly more complicated (Kane & Francis, 2013). The information from this study provided information to this district and others that is current and relevant. It also provided information to other schools and districts that are seeking to implement their own mentorship programs.

This study also has theoretical significance. This study is based upon the theory of teacher development proposed by Katz (1972) and Fuller (1969). This theory states that induction or mentorship programs should follow pre-service preparation, which will ultimately improve classroom teacher practices and teacher retention, which will improve student learning and growth. Kane and Francis (2013) suggested the initial years of teaching have the biggest influence on the quality of teacher that the new teacher will become. The adult learning theory, proposed by Kenner and Weinerman (2011), is also represented in this study. It is based upon the fact that adults are usually self-directed and are ready to learn. A good relationship between the mentor and bis one of the main strengths of a successful mentoring program (Martinez-Agudo, 2016). If the relationship between the mentor and beginning teacher is strong, then the new teacher will trust the mentor more beginning teacher and be more open to the suggestions and critique that the mentor must offer. This study supports both theories and gives further evidence to continue building quality mentorship programs upon them.

Research Questions

Many studies have been done to investigate the actual mentorship program and the effects of the program in various school districts in Australia, Canada, and states in the United States, such as New York, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C. (Ambrosetti, 2014; Carr, 2013; Cook, 2012; Fry, 2010a). I studied the perceptions of beginning teachers and mentors
concerning the effectiveness of their district program. I also investigated what the participants perceived as successful areas of the program and what areas may have needed improvement. Each participant shared their perception of the effectiveness of the program based on their own perspective. To achieve this, I used the following research questions.

**RQ1:** What are beginning teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?

**RQ2:** What are the participating mentors’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?

Findings from the study by Rideout and Windler (2010) suggest that during the beginning years, internal influences become important. It has been stated by Cuenca (2011) that learning to teach when an educator is in the student teacher phase provides more support for the beginning teacher. During student teaching, the cooperating teacher often provides the support and mentoring that prospective teachers will need in the future. Fry (2010b) emphasized the supportive nature and elements that the cooperating teacher provides the pre-service teacher is a goal later provided in the induction phase, which will reduce attrition and ensure that the new teachers will become successful. Hudson (2012) reinforced this by stating that a community of mentors are needed, such as a community in the physical building of the beginning teacher who can provide all the support the beginning teacher needs, including the who, what, how, and when that are required of their profession. All this research supports the fact that mentorship programs are important to the development of beginning teachers into quality professionals.

The duties of a teacher require a lot of time and effort, and this may not allow for adequate time for beginning teachers to spend with their mentor (DeCesare, Workman, & McClelland, 2016). Adequate time is needed to allow for collaboration with the mentor so that
the beginning teacher feels prepared for the challenges of the classroom. One of the purposes of a mentorship program is to provide the beginning teachers with moral support. A classroom, especially to the beginning teacher, can be a lonely place where a teacher must perform many duties in addition to teach the curriculum (McLaughlin, 2013). The relationship of the mentor and new teacher should be one in which the beginning teacher feels comfortable in approaching the mentor with any questions or concerns that they may confront in the classroom (Hudson, 2013). Martinez-Agudo (2016) also stated that the relationship between the mentor beginning teacher is one of the main strengths of a successful mentoring program.

A teacher’s duties do not just include teaching a class. A teacher must be able to follow the routines and procedures of the school and district. They must be able to manage a classroom so that learning may happen. They must be able to communicate with students, other teachers, and parents (Zeiger, 2016). These are required duties of the teacher that the beginning teacher can only learn from experience. This experience will be most productive if guided by the competent hand of a mentor.

In their interviews and journaling, the beginning teachers provided information that gave insight into the program concerning how prepared they felt for their teaching position. They also gave insight into the strategies and information that were provided and if these were adequate to make them successful in the classroom. The relationship of the mentor and beginning teacher was also explored. They were asked what parts of the program they felt were successful and what areas could be improved. They listed specific skills they learned from their mentor and skills that were not presented that they may have wanted to learn (see Appendix A for Interview Questions).
Studies indicate that a large majority of public schools are experiencing large rates of teacher turnover (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Many of these teachers are beginning teachers. As a result, many schools have implemented some type of mentoring program to try to support the beginning teachers in the classroom. Ambrosetti (2014) indicated that many of the mentors in these programs are not receiving any type of training in mentorship. It is simply assumed that an effective teacher can pass on their own knowledge and skills to the next generation of teachers. According to Ambrosetti, people are not normally equipped with the ability to mentor. This may cause additional stress on the mentoring teacher. Although they may want to properly prepare beginning teachers, they may not have the proper skills to attain this goal.

In addition, the mentor teachers are, in many cases, not given any release time to meet the needs of the beginning teacher. At times, all they are given is their prep time, which is provided for the purpose of preparation of lessons plans, and not preparation of new teachers. Providing extra release time requires time taken away from a teacher’s normal duties. This may require the district to hire other teachers to fill in this gap, which can then put a financial burden on the district (DeCesare et al., 2016). Providing the mentor with common planning periods with their beginning teacher may help with the amount of time they spend together; however, this still cuts short the time for the teacher’s own lesson planning.

Fawns-Justeson (2012) found that education (and mentoring) is not simply a transfer of knowledge, but also a building of relationships that will benefit both the teacher and the student (in this case, the mentor and the beginning teacher). Mentors are required to build these relationships with new teachers without any consideration to compatibility. Ambrosetti (2014) indicated that mentoring is often described as an “interpersonal relationships that comprises of a series of purposeful, social interactions” (p. 118). However, many times, the mentor is required
to evaluate the beginning teacher, which may cause a strain on their personal relationship. These situations may put additional strain and stress on mentors. These mentors may be willing to help in the mentorship program but are hesitant because of these factors.

In their interviews and journaling, the mentors provided information concerning the mentorship program from their individual perspectives. They also provided information concerning their perception of the skills provided by the mentorship program that will meet the needs of the beginning teacher. The mentors offered evidence concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the program and noted any areas that may have needed changing (see Appendix A for interview questions).

**Definitions**

1. *Highly qualified* - In the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), Congress defined a highly-qualified teacher as someone who has full state certification and solid content knowledge (South Carolina Department of Education [SCDOE], 2015).

2. *Induction or beginning teachers* – Teachers who are in the transitional period between pre-service preparation and continuing professional development (Kessels, 2010). For this paper, teachers with between 0-2 years’ experience as a teacher.

3. *Mentor* – An academic mentor is a guide that takes his/her students (or beginning teacher) to becoming experienced teachers, by sharing their expertise and experiences (Potgieter, 2016).

4. *Mentorship* - A personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person (Kane & Francis, 2013).
5. **Mentorship programs** - A program that attempts to improve teacher performance, reduce teacher attrition, promote the personal and professional well-being of new teachers, and transmit the culture of the educational system to new teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011)

6. **Perception** – The state of learning from your own experiences and from your own awareness and reflections (Moustakas, 1994).

7. **Teacher attrition** - May include teachers exiting the profession but may also include teachers who change fields (i.e., special education to general education) or schools (Kutsyuruba et al., 2014).

**Summary**

Teacher attrition rates have increased dramatically over the past 10 years. This has caused many problems in the teaching profession: a shortage of teachers in an increasingly growing population of students, beginning teachers who are feeling isolated and frustrated with the duties required in the classroom, and a resulting drop in the achievement of their students. This problem not only affects teachers and students, but it also burdens administrators who must find replacements for the departing teachers (Bland et al., 2014). This attrition rate may be avoided if beginning teachers can be provided with support received through quality mentorship programs (Kane & Francis, 2013). The purpose of this single case study is to gather data from the perceptions of beginning teachers and mentors concerning the district mentorship program from interviews, observations, and journaling. The careful analyzing of this data using Moustakas’ (1994) Phenomenological Research Method provided a means to look for similar patterns in the data and offer suggestions and advice to help with the possibility of lowering the attrition rates in the county.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter provides a background regarding literature on mentorship programs and the need for these programs in schools. The theoretical framework for this study is provided along with literature on topics such as the history of mentorship programs, the purpose of mentorship programs, and the components of a successful mentorship program. Also included is the state requirements of a mentorship program, a description of the program in the county studied, and the degree of support that the administration of the schools provide.

Theoretical Foundation

Teacher mentorship is a method of training and preparing teachers that use the knowledge and experiences of seasoned and experienced teachers to guide beginning teachers through their first years of becoming professionals in the classroom (Ingersoll, Merrill & May., 2014). Teaching is an extremely complex profession that requires more than just knowledge of the content areas involved and information about teaching methods and theories. Becoming a successful teacher requires not only knowing about teaching methods and content, but it also requires a teacher to organize and arrange all the components that will make a teacher successful (Ingersoll, 2012). These components include knowledge of the content area, development of meaningful lesson plans, assessing the material, lesson plans and student success, and other duties such as parent meetings and professional development, all of which are not necessarily emphasized in the traditional teacher preparation programs found in today’s universities (Kane & Francis, 2013).

The teaching profession has emerged over the years as an increasingly complex profession. Although teaching programs may prepare the teachers for the classroom in theory,
these programs are falling short of preparing teachers for the actual duties that are required in the modern-day classroom (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). More demands from state, district, and local entities require that teachers function in a classroom in ways that they have never been required to do in the past. This situation now requires districts to examine the training provided by the universities and supplement this training with their own.

The idea of mentorship is based partly upon the theory of teacher development, which reflects the studies of both Katz (1972) and Fuller (1969). Katz (1972) stated that teacher development has two general meanings. Teacher development can be referred to as using activities, such as workshops and graduate coursework, to develop teachers’ professional abilities. It can also be referred to as providing hands-on experience to provide the development. However, mentorship programs are usually based upon the definition by Katz (1972): “the natural process of development which teachers undergo during their careers” (p. 1). Katz’s study and theory were based upon preschool teachers, but the study has been applied to other teachers in all grade levels. The purpose of Katz’s study was to examine the training needs of teachers at different points in their careers. Katz based her information on four stages that teachers go through during their careers (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1.** Katz’s (1972) theory of teacher development. Stages of teacher development.

Stage one, according to Katz’s theory, is referred to as the survival stage, which is the first year or two of teaching. The beginning teacher knows what he or she must do but is not
sure how to accomplish it. This first year is the most important to the development of a beginning teacher’s self-worth. It is when he or she will determine if this will become a life-long profession. Stage two is consolidation, where teachers begin focusing on the students and look for patterns of student behaviors. The teacher begins to recognize the goals of the students; therefore, less emphasis is placed upon the beginning teacher, and more emphasis is placed upon the needs of the students. Stage three brings about the desire to renew or refresh the teacher’s teaching skills but continues to put the emphasis upon the needs of the students. In this stage, the new teacher looks for more student-centered techniques and approaches. Stage four is considered the maturity stage, and this stage brings about the feelings of security and competency in their teaching skills. This is when the true professionalism begins.

As appears in Figure 1, it is apparent that the need for mentorship support is important in the first years of a beginning teacher’s career. According to Katz’s (1972) theory, the timing of training is an important issue. It should be shifted so that more training is available to the teacher on the job. This is supported by the fact that teachers say their pre-service education had only a minor influence on what they do day-to-day in their classrooms. This claim suggests that strategies acquired before employment will often not be retrieved under the pressures of the actual classroom and school situation.

Fuller (1969) presented a three-phase model like Katz’s theory. Fuller’s stage one is the pre-teaching stage in which the student teacher is learning about teaching. Stage two of the theory is the early teaching stage in which the teacher is learning about themselves and are looking for guidance from other teachers, school personnel, and other professionals to function adequately in the classroom. In this phase, the teachers are concerned about their self-adequacies and abilities. They are worried about their classroom management skills and visits from their
supervisors. According to Fuller (1969), stage three is when the teacher becomes focused on their students. They are basing their success on the performance of their students. They are now concerned with the understanding of their students, the students’ goals, and how they contribute to these concepts. Fuller found that student learning and knowledge is tied to motivation and that teacher preparation is in dire need of knowledge concerning these aspects of learning. Unfortunately, this information is not readily available in what is considered a traditional teacher education program. This causes a gap in what teachers say they need in the classroom and what is being taught in teacher education programs. More recently, it is stated in the Hechinger Report (2015), an independent, nonprofit news report that researches and reports national education issues, that there are too many unprepared new teachers in the classrooms that lack experience, especially when it comes to working with diverse, low-income students. The report also stated that teacher training programs are not providing adequate student teaching that is preparing effective teachers for the classroom (Mader, 2015).

The theory of teacher development as described by Fuller (1969) and Katz (1972) shows teachers are provided with a complex, pre-employment teacher preparation program, but these programs are rarely enough to provide all the knowledge and skills necessary to successful teaching. Ingersoll (2011) put together the components of both Katz’s and Fuller’s theories to develop his own theory that shows the goals should be the improvement of teacher performance and the retention of beginning teachers. Ingersoll stated the aim of the theory was to improve the growth and learning of students. Figure 2 shows the flow of teacher development according to Ingersoll’s consolidation of all the above-mentioned theories.
Most induction and mentorship programs are based upon the fact that support is provided to the beginning teacher so that they will be able become a successful teacher. This is typical of the theory of induction in Zey’s Mutual Benefits model, drawn from the Social Exchange Theory (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). According to Ingersoll & Strong, the model is based upon the fact that individuals enter and remain part of relationships to meet certain needs. This relationship lasts as long the individual continues receiving these benefits. This model, according to Zey, states that the organization (in this case the school) will also benefit from the relationship.

A good mentorship program also has components of the adult learning theory. Andragogy is defined as the “life-long learning of adults” (Henschke, 2009, p.3). Alexander Kapp, a German high-school teacher, first used this term in 1833 (Merriam, 2001). Knowles (1984) later used the term andragogy when he referred to his theory of adult education. He defined it as “the art and science of adult education” (p. 43). According to Knowles, andragogy refers to man-leading in comparison to the term pedagogy, which refers to child-leading.

Knowles believes there are six main characteristics of the adult learning theory. The first is that adult-learning is self-directed/autonomous. This means that adult learners are actively involved in learning, making choices according to their own learning objectives. They need to know the purpose and outcome of what they are learning. Their learning goals are usually guided by mentors or facilitators. Secondly, adult learners use their knowledge and life experiences to guide their learning. Adults have a large resource of life experiences and can use their experiences to guide their learning. Adult learning, according to Knowles, is also goal-oriented. Once learning goals are established, adults have a clear picture of what is to be accomplished and
become focused on these goals. Next, adults have an orientation to learning. Knowles stated that “to adults, education is a process of improving their ability to face life problems that they are facing now” (p. 53). They are motivated to engage in problem solving and projects and are willing to successfully complete the projects. Adults want to see the immediate results of learning. They are very problem-focused and are anxious to resolve the problem. The adult learning is also based upon the fact that adults’ motivation to learn is internal. They have their own learning goals, they choose the methods of learning that work for them, and they evaluate their own progress with their own goals in mind. Lastly, adults like to know why they are learning. The need to know the purpose and outcome of what they are learning. They learn better using collaboration, which helps them feel that their contributions are valued and important to the project or problem being addressed and that their contributions are important to the intended outcome.

Knowles also based his theory of adult learning on four principles. These principles include: adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction, they need to be provided with experiences upon which to base their learning, adults want to be involved with learning that has immediate effect and relevance on their life, and they learn better when it is problem-centered instead of content centered. Educators of adults should become facilitators of learning and not just contributors.

Merriam (2001) felt adult learning needs to be approached holistically. The learner is an emotional being as well as a physical being. The learner is composed of memories, conscious and sub-conscious worlds, and imagination. She stated that learning is “sense of our lives, transforming not just what we learn but the way we learn, including absorbing, imagining,
intuiting, and learning informally with others” (p. 96). Adult learning can be observed as an examination of how all adults consider obtaining knowledge.

According to Kenner and Weinerman (2011), the adult learning theory focuses on characteristics of this unique population of learners—the adults. It is based upon the fact that adults are usually self-directed and will take the responsibility for their own actions. They will also resist having information arbitrarily imposed on them. Adults have an extensive depth of experience that serves as a critical component in the foundation of their self-identity. Most adults are ready to learn and are already motivated to accomplish what needs to be accomplished.

These characteristics and ideas of the adult learner, in this situation the beginning teacher, are taken into consideration as the mentor interacts with his/her beginning teacher. Other studies, such as those done by Carr (2013), DeCesare et al. (2016), Ross and Lignugaris-Kraft (2015), and Smith and Engemann (2015), confirm the foundation and characteristics of these theories.

The idea of mentorship is partially from the model of discipleship as taught by Jesus. Jesus chose twelve men who would follow Him and witness the miracles and teachings that He shared with humanity. A disciple is a follower who watches and learns a component of the mentorship program. “Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it’” (Matthew 16:24-25, ESV). Jesus spent His time on earth not only serving the people, but He also was in the process of training men to carry on His work after He returned to His Father in heaven. Matthew 28:18-20 says,

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the
Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (ESV)

These theories and principles are the basis of the teacher mentorship programs that provide beginning teachers with the guidance that is needed for them to become successful in the classroom. These components contribute to forming a program that will positively affect the lives of young teachers and eventually the lives of young students who are being prepared for the future.

**History of Mentoring Programs**

As mentioned previously, mentoring has its early roots in principles of discipleship presented in the Bible by Jesus as He was training His disciples. According to McLaughlin (2013), mentoring takes place when one person desires to emulate the life of another, which is where mentoring is like the discipleship method that Jesus used with his disciples. This often includes several specific skills, especially pertaining to leadership or business. Mentoring is very common to the world of business and other professions, such as law and education (McLaughlin, 2013).

The concept of mentorship is believed to have originated in ancient Greece in Homer's Odyssey (Butler, 1900/1944). According to the Butler, when Odysseus began his odyssey, he left his infant son in the care of a companion of his named Mentor. Greek mythology refers to this companion, now known as a mentor, as a person who teaches, coaches, protects, and guides. According to Shea (1997), the word mentor is now associated with being a trusted friend, wise teacher, and advisor. Some famous mentor relationships in history include Socrates and Plato, Hayden and Beethoven, Freud and Jung.
Scholars agree that all forms of mentoring, including youth, educational, and workplace, have been associated with positive forms of outcome for those involved (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2009). Studies have also shown that mentors may help the beginning teachers learn strategies that help them deal with interpersonal problems at work, home, or school. This relationship can also help the beginning teacher to develop positive expectations about interpersonal relationships with others (Rhodes, Grossman, & Mensch, 2000).

The idea of teacher mentorship programs is based upon the fact that experienced and seasoned educators guide and mentor beginning teachers (Fry, 2010a). They provide the beginning teacher with insights and information about the teaching profession that may not necessarily have been provided by universities in the traditional teacher preparation programs. The concept of mentorship has been used many years in various other industries in forms of programs such as shadowing, internships, and on-the-job training. These types of programs provide guidance to the new employee by other experienced employees. Most of these programs are used not only to prepare employees for the workplace, but also to increase the retention of experienced and satisfied employees.

Recently there has been an increasing interest in support, guidance, and orientation programs collectively known as induction for beginning elementary and secondary teachers during the all-important transition period from teacher education to the actual practice of a teacher (Carr, 2013). Historically, the teaching profession has not had the kind of structured induction and initiation processes common to many white-collar occupations and characteristics of many of the traditional professions (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Educational researchers and reformers have called attention to the challenges encountered by newcomers to school teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014; Eby et al.,
The research and studies done by Ingersoll & Kralik (2004), Ingersoll et al., (2011); and Ingersoll et al., (2014) have contributed greatly to the development of mentorship programs that are recognized as successful. Kang and Berliner (2012) suggested that Ingersoll and Smith (2004) conducted one of the few quantitative studies to examine the relationship between teacher induction programs and retention of beginning teachers. The study showed that three inductions or mentorship activities had an impact on reducing teacher attrition. These activities included seminars, common planning, and receiving extra classroom assistance. At least two of these, common planning and extra classroom assistance, are present in many of the induction programs being used today. Recent studies, such as those conducted by Kidd, Brown, and Fitzallen (2015) and by Meyer (2016), not only confirm this, but both studies recommend that support during the early years of teacher development will help improve the effectiveness of beginning teachers and eventually help them develop into more effective teachers.

Evans (2002) also studied and researched teacher development. According to Evans, teacher development and its concept may not be clearly defined. References are made to the expansion of the teaching profession’s knowledge base, new structures and approaches for deepening and sharing knowledge, restructuring teacher knowledge, the amalgamation of practitioners’ experientially-acquired knowledge, and the knowledge generated in higher education institutions. Another definition suggested by Evans indicates that a teacher should investigate their own practice and develop their own theory about what it means to be a teacher. Evans continues to explore exactly what teacher development is and should be. In the conclusion of her article, Evans stated that teacher development is basically a practice that needs to be ongoing; it should never be considered complete, and it may heighten the status of the
teaching profession. She put emphasis on the reflective nature of teacher development and stated that the on-going process is a major component in teacher development.

Evans (2002) also mentioned that teacher development goes through stages. These stages include job-related situations that may not be recognized as perfect, using remedial action strategies, and using effectual remedial actions. As a teacher experiences these stages, it is important that seasoned teachers who know the struggles of the beginning teacher can assist this beginner with the process of teacher development. Evans felt as the process of teaching and teacher development is studied and researched, programs can be developed that will adequately prepare the beginning teacher. These competent contributors have added components upon which most mentorship programs are based.

**Purpose of Mentoring Programs**

Teachers are educated in teacher preparation programs that prepare the teacher candidates academically to be a teacher in the classroom. Emphasis has been put on knowledge of content, study of theories of education, and on the methods of planning and presenting the lesson plans that contain the content. Most programs include a student teaching component, which allows the student teacher to experience teaching on their own with the guidance of an experienced teacher (Hen & Sharabi, 2013). “Today the quality of teachers is held to be increasingly important yet there continues to be doubts about whether teacher education programs graduate teachers that are ready to meet the challenges of their initial years of teaching” (Kane & Francis, 2013, p. 362). Schools have become more complex and the expectations for teachers have increased.

Teaching is a complex goal-oriented activity that requires teachers to combine knowledge and skills like never to have direct impact on students’ learning. Teachers are constantly required to respond to the complex needs of individual students, understanding all their students’
behavior, teaching combined grades with varying levels of student abilities, assessing and reporting student progress, and teaching with limited resources. This all puts a huge amount of stress on new teachers. The aforementioned coupled with a decade-long shift in the demographics of the American public school, specifically the increase in the number of students of Hispanic decent (SCIH, 2016), contributes to the teachers’ stress. Teachers then begin to face many feelings of inadequacy caused by fear of being perceived incompetent, not being accepted by colleagues, and challenges brought about by parents.

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) examined induction programs, which in their discussion included mentorship programs. They identified two distinct purposes of induction programs: primarily, the development and design to foster growth on the part of newcomers and, in addition, the assessment and weeding out of those deemed ill-suited to the job. Up until the introduction of mentorship programs, new teachers have had to search for their own resources to support them in the classroom. According to Rideout and Windler (2010), these are only quick fixes and usually appear in the form of professional development seminars, which only simulate the foundations that a new teacher really needs. Teacher induction is different from both pre-service and in-service teacher training programs. They are not just additional training modules but are designed for those who have already completed basic training and will prepare the beginning teacher for the challenges of the modern-day classroom.

In addition to providing needed support for the beginning teacher, teacher mentorships programs are needed to address the increasing problem of teacher retention. According to Daugherty (2010), public schools in every state, including South Carolina, struggle with problems of inadequate teacher supply. South Carolina needs more than 10,000 new teachers each year due to the enormous enrollment growth, class size reduction initiatives, retirements,
and high teacher attrition rates that is present in the state. “60% of all teacher candidates choose not to enter the classroom at all after completing their professional training, and by the 5th year of teaching, about half of novice teachers have left the profession” (p. 1). This is because of the overwhelming feelings of inadequacy that these situations cause in beginning teachers.

Daugherty (2010) stated teacher attrition was recognized as a major problem affecting the education system as early as the 1970s. It was estimated that during a given year, 33% of all beginning teachers left the field for a variety of reasons (2010). St. John’s County in South Carolina experienced attrition rates as high as 55% in 2005 (School District Website, 2014), which prompted them to begin a mentorship program. High attrition rates in a school district can cause loss of public teacher preparation and investment, higher costs of hiring, and loss of professional development investments. Sass, Bustos-Flores, Claeys, and Perez (2012) have also suggested that the high rates of teacher attrition are troublesome because this attrition not only influences students’ performance and lowers the quality of educational experiences, but it also disrupts the organizational capacity to sustain quality programs. Bland et al. (2014) suggested that teacher attrition hurts the students because new teachers must be brought in to replace the departing teacher, which can cause gaps in the students’ learning. It also, according to Bland et al., puts pressure on administrators who must constantly look for replacement teachers.

Another consideration of the effects of teacher attrition is the cost to schools and school districts. To attempt to calculate the cost of teacher attrition, the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) worked with Ingersoll, professor of education and sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. In addition to the national figure, Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey (2014) also provided cost estimates for all fifty states and the District of Columbia that ranged roughly between $2 million in Delaware, Vermont, and Wyoming and up to $235 million in Texas
Neill, Bland, Church, Clayburn, and Shimeall (2010) estimated that in 2005 replacing public school teachers who left the profession or who transferred to other schools’ cost $2.2 billion per year.

Studies by Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2012) showed that teachers who received less pedagogical training were more likely to leave the teaching field. The highest rates are occurring in math and science fields, which have the biggest need for teachers. Also noted was the fact that a large percentage of science and math teachers have entered the teaching profession through a non-traditional method that did not include adequate pedagogical teacher training.

The focus of the Ingersoll et al. (2012) study was beginning teachers, the place where the highest percent of teacher attrition is occurring. It was discovered that the various types of traditional teacher preparation programs did not affect the rate of attrition; however, the student teaching component of the teacher preparation programs fell short of meeting the real needs of a beginning teacher. This only puts more emphasis on the fact that teacher mentorship programs need to become part of a beginning teacher’s development. Effective mentorship programs may be able to contribute to the reduction of these new teacher attrition rates (as high as 50%), along with preparing these new teachers for the unique challenges of the modern classroom.

Meyer (2016) studied beginning teachers who received field experience prior to entering the classroom. Meyer described the field experiences as experiences in an actual classroom by a beginning teacher supervised by a cooperating teacher. The results of his study encouraged teacher preparation programs and schools to work closer together to provide experiences that are needed for beginning teachers to be adequately prepared for the classroom. There is a need for teacher mentorship programs, and emphasis needs to be placed on examining existing programs or developing new programs that will meet the needs of beginning teachers.
The Teacher Shortage Problem

The teacher shortage has become a nationwide issue. According to the United States Department of Education:

in Arizona, in 1990-1991, fewer than 10 schools and no more than 15 districts were listed as having unspecified shortages. For 2015-16, statewide shortages in South Carolina have increased dramatically and examples in various disciplines are following. For example, in middle schools, ESL (English as a Second Language) and BLE (Bilingual Education) teachers are needed, and foreign language, general science, math, reading, special education and art educators are in shortage supply. (DE, 2017, para. 9)

This is not the only state that is experiencing this shortage. DE (Department of Education) also lists shortages in five states and territories, namely Guam, American Samoa, Northern Marianna Islands, Palau, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. DE states the purpose of the report was to serve as a reference document to show potential teachers, administrators and other educators where the opportunities existed; however, it also gives a clear picture that there is a dramatic shortage of teachers in the United States.

The NCES (2015) reported that between the years of 2010 and 2019, total enrollment for public and private elementary and secondary schools is expected to grow from 55 million to 58 million. The California Department of Education had to fill 21,500 teaching positions with only 15,000 new teachers entering the teaching profession (Rich, 2015). The drastic drop in the enrollment in teacher education programs was also noted as a cause of a shortage of teachers—a 74% drop in less than ten years in California (Rich, 2015). Charlotte, NC tried to fill over 200 teaching positions just a few short weeks before school began in August 2016 (Lee, 2016). The Savannah-Chatham School District in Georgia advertised “Savannah-Chatham hiring 450
teachers, no education degree required” (Bounds, 2016, para. 1). They stated the crucial need for teachers was caused by fewer students pursuing education degrees, military deployments (the area has three military bases), and more teachers retiring or leaving the teaching profession.

According to Scherer (2003), the media has not been completely honest with concerning the complexity of the education program and suggests that initiatives need to be developed to address the complexity of the issue and possible solutions that may exacerbate the situation. The shortage affects many aspects of education, but the most obvious and most crucial is the effect it has on the education of the students in this country. According to Ingersoll, Alsalam, Quinn, and Bobbitt (1997), principals who face difficulties in locating sufficient numbers of qualified job candidates use three strategies to help fill these vacant positions. These strategies include hiring less-qualified teachers, assigning teachers to different fields or grade levels than those they are trained in, and overly using substitute teachers. These measures are evident in many of the programs that states are implementing to hire the needed teachers. Individuals with bachelor’s degrees in any area are being hired to teach in the classroom. New teachers who have not yet received their credentials are also being hired, along with many classrooms being manned with long-term substitute teachers. Teachers are being recruited from other countries, school districts are offering sign-on bonuses, housing allowances, and payment for moving expenses. Not all the solutions are conducive to the quality education that students in this country should be receiving. The shortages are also not evenly distributed. There are more shortages in certain geographic areas, such as in urban and rural schools, and subject-related areas, such as special education, bilingual areas, and in the math and sciences.
Teacher shortages are an increasing problem facing both the district of St. John’s and the state of South Carolina, and the increasing size of the student population only contributes to this problem. According to the CERRA (2015),

of those (teachers) who left during or after the 2013-14 school year, 33% did so in the first five years of their career and 13% after just one year or less in the classroom. These figures rose from 30% and 1% last year, and this trend continues to negatively impact districts, schools and, more importantly, students. (para.5)

The student enrollment in the state of South Carolina has increased 2.7% from 2006 to 2011 according to the NCES. The projected growth for 2011-2023 is 6.0%. The SCIH (2015) keeps predicting major growth in the population, expecting it to be over 202,000, showing a 25% increase in population for the county from 2015-2025. The problem of teacher shortages can be helped if teachers are trained in quality mentorship programs that help to keep teachers longer.

Overall, South Carolina does not produce enough teachers through the state’s teacher education programs to fill current and anticipated vacant positions. The state of South Carolina is experiencing teacher shortages in certain subject areas. The CERRA website (2015) shows that the shortages in such areas as science, social studies, and math are increasingly getting worse. There are teachers entering the teaching profession in the state; they are just not in the needed areas.

The Importance of Mentoring Programs

A study conducted by Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2012) showed that teachers who receive less pedagogical training are more likely to leave teaching. Most universities and colleges that prepare teachers for the classroom put the emphasis on the content area that the teacher will be teaching, academic duties such as lesson planning and assessment of students,
and other teaching skills that put more emphasis on the art of teaching and not necessarily the actual duties that will consume the time of the teacher. Some of these other duties that beginning teachers are required to do, but not necessarily prepared in college to do, include various reports required by the state and district, a tremendous amount of professional development and additional training, and other meetings such as parent-teacher meetings, content area meetings and others required by the districts and schools. A beginning teacher will enter the world of the classroom not necessarily prepared for these everyday duties of a teacher that are not always student-focused. There are so many state-based, district-based, and school-based requirements that accompany the current demands of a teacher that have not been discussed or even mentioned. These requirements can cause the beginning teacher to be overwhelmed with their first few years in the teaching profession, thus causing them to reconsider their career choices and possibly leave the profession completely (Kane & Francis, 2013).

Many teachers are entering the teaching profession from other areas of the professional world. Because there are many programs that enable individuals to convert their non-teaching degrees into teaching credentials, they provide convenient ways to enter the teaching profession for the first time. However, this process, according to Potgieter (2016), does not always provide training in the actual process of teaching. These individuals may enter the classroom, become completely disillusioned during their first year’s experiences as a teacher, and soon leave the profession.

The current teacher evaluation system used in the district and state also brings with it more pressure, not only more pressure to beginning teachers, but all teachers. The Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT) system has been used in this state for many years, but a new component (Expanded ADEPT with an added component of SLO
[Student Learning Objective]) was implemented this year, which not only required evaluations by administrators based on teacher observation, but also includes components that are based on student performance. I knew that although student performance is important when considering the value of a teacher, it should not be part of a teacher’s evaluation, especially when the performance of the student is based solely upon a few pieces of student performance (in the ADEPT program, it is only three). Another system used in teacher evaluation in the state is known as EVAAS (Education Value-added Assessment System). According to EVAAS (2015), it measures what teachers can influence without holding them accountable for things out of their control. EVAAS for K-12 enables educators to recognize progress and growth over time. It also provides a clear path to achieving the United States’ goal of leading the world in college completion by the year 2020 (para. 2). However, the evaluation system rates the teacher on a scale of 1-5, one being least effective and five being most effective. The system is not available to the public but only to the teacher, administrators, and superintendents. Although it is stated that this is not part of a teacher’s evaluation, it has been suggested by anonymous sources that principals use this system when making decisions involving hiring and firing teachers. This puts an extreme amount of pressure on not only beginning teachers, but on all teachers.

Ingersoll (2012) suggested that much has been noted about what he refers to as a graying trend in the teaching force. This trend indicates that teachers are entering the teaching force later in life and reaching retirement quicker. This is leaving gaps in the teaching force in numbers that are higher than in the past. This has resulted in schools and school districts recruiting more and more beginning teachers. Ingersoll stated that by 2012, the beginner teacher would be more abundant in the teaching force. He felt that by the end of the quarter, most of the teaching force would be composed of teachers who would have less than five years’ experience. This change in
the demographics only increased the need for a program that is going to adequately prepare the teachers that will be in today’s classrooms.

In addition, Ingersoll, Merrill, and May’s (2014) study showed that students who are taught by experienced, certified teachers scored significantly better than those taught by beginning teachers. This same study also revealed that the education of teachers in mathematics is consistently related to a rise in the math proficiency of students taught by this teacher. This is important if a teacher is put into a teaching position where they have not been previously educated.

Programs vary according to their purpose. Some, for instance, are primarily developmental and designed to foster growth on the part of the newcomers. Others are designed to assess, and perhaps, even eliminate those deemed inadequate for the job. Mentor programs provide support for beginning teachers who are coming directly from university experiences and guidance, which enables them to be successful in the classroom. According to Ingersoll (2012), most teaching positions involve intensive interaction with youngsters. Although there is much interaction with young people, most of the work of teachers is done largely in isolation from colleagues. The resulting isolation can be especially problematic for newcomers who are frequently left to succeed or fail on their own. Studies have shown that teachers are beginning later in the teaching profession. These teachers will retire sooner, and more teachers will be required. This also puts an emphasis on the need of mentorship programs. Schools who are under the pressure of state and district requirements find it necessary to hire more qualified and experienced teachers. The beginning teacher coming out of the university does not have the necessary skills to meet the school’s need for high performance.
The retention issue is also a huge reason for implementing teacher mentorship programs. Early attrition from the profession is a major but often overlooked factor behind shortages of teachers. If teacher mentorship programs can alleviate the high attrition rates that many schools and school districts are experiencing, this can be a major asset for implementing these programs in schools.

**Components of Effective Mentorship Programs**

According to Ingersoll (2012), effective induction and mentoring of new teachers is a critical component of early career teacher development and is widely accepted. It is a necessity in the development of quality teachers. Paris (2010) added that research from the USA, Canada, UK, and Australia suggests that widespread traditional-method induction failure and high attrition rates in the teaching profession are endemic in many countries and, therefore, of international significance. An effective mentorship program can provide the components to help make the transition from college graduation to working in the classroom a more rewarding experience. According to Paris, a graduate who experiences a supportive transition from study to work and survives the first year will benefit the entire school. Kutsyuruba, Godden, and Tregunna (2014) have claimed that induction programs positively affect beginning teachers with effective mentoring in the early teaching years. This will then increase student achievement and reduce the waste of resources and human potential associated with early-career attrition. Therefore, this puts emphasis on the components that make successful mentoring programs. One key aspect is the support for the beginning teacher. Fry (2010b) believed that the supportive elements of induction can be important to pre-service teachers who are trying to learn to be collaborative professionals. Beginning teachers who feel supported are more confident in performing the duties they are required to do to be perceived as successful teachers. This
support can be presented in many ways. First, and foremost, the beginning teacher needs to feel supported in the basic duties of a teacher. This means that they need assistance with daily lesson planning, self-reflection, and student assessment. Even though beginning teachers may have learned these skills in the classroom, there is nothing that compares to the experience teachers receive when planning and teaching their own lessons. This assistance can come in various forms, such as one-on-one assistance, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), and department and grade-level planning. Not only does the beginning teacher receive the benefits of a mentor, but they can also receive valuable advice from other teachers in the building.

Another important element of the induction program is the reflective nature of the program. Smith and Engemann (2015) commented that when responding to beginning teachers’ experiences through writing reflective commentaries and engaging in discussions, the mentors acquire awareness and insight into thoughts, feelings, concerns, and anxieties of beginning teachers. Although not a component of all mentorship programs, this reflective piece can become an important part of implementing new programs and improving existing programs. Reflection on any process used in education is an important aspect regardless of the experience of the teacher (Smith & Engemann, 2015). A teacher must constantly reflect on lessons, methods of presenting lessons, and receptions by the students of the lessons to make their teaching more effective. This reflective piece enables a beginning teacher to review the lessons and lesson plans and determine their successes and failures. With the assistance of a mentor, the beginning teacher can take these reflections and turn them into constructive criticism, which will result in more effective lesson plans.

An additional factor is the offer of collaboration, which is a critical component for the mentorship program in all areas of education. Collaboration with colleagues offers an unlimited
amount of information useful in making lesson plans successful and by combing new strategies with some old tried and true methods. Smith and Engemann (2015) suggested when two or more people work together collaboratively, each person must express his or her personal expectations for the work. As mentioned earlier, this collaboration can take place during one-on-one meetings with their mentors, PLCs, and department meetings. PLCs are opportunities that provide collaboration with colleagues. These opportunities provide teachers with a process for discussing real problems that teachers may be facing regarding student achievement. The focus is on the successes and failures of the students as teachers compare successful methods being used in each classroom. PLCs are designed to impact a teacher’s classroom and practices in ways that will lead to better results for their students, their team, and their school. The PLCs are designed not only with beginning teachers in mind, but all teachers. This collaboration between colleagues can provide the beginning teacher with successful methods of teaching.

Mentor teachers can also provide the experiences that the beginning teacher lacks (Ingersoll, 2012). The beginning teacher will soon accumulate experiences that will help them later in their careers; however, the mentor teacher can provide insight into some of these experiences that will help the beginning teacher immediately. Mentors have an impact on new teachers in ways that no amount of training can provide. This includes providing real-life classroom situations to be discussed and reflected upon by both the mentor and the beginning teacher. This collaboration will give practical, concrete advice, pose important questions to prompt reflection, model teaching techniques in the class, observe and offer feedback, and offer another point of view at a time when it is easy to lose all perspective.

Another important aspect of mentoring programs is that mentors can provide the beginning teacher with information about the school, school district, state standards, and policies
that can seem overwhelming to a novice teacher (Mentoring Program Guide, 2014). In many comprehensive induction programs, a mentor teacher will provide the novice teacher with a basic orientation of school procedures, norms, and expectations (Hobson, Harris, Manley, & Smith, 2012). Every district and school have rules and procedures that are necessary to help the school run smoothly and that meet the educational requirements of the state. For example, a school may require the teacher to follow certain procedures when conducting parent-teacher meetings.

Although parent meetings are discussed and taught in teacher preparation programs, the actual procedure that needs to be followed may be unique to each school. A mentor can provide the support that will enable the beginning teacher to conduct a parent meeting with finesse and skill. This support is important to the modern teacher who has these responsibilities to consider as they are preparing lessons for the classroom.

Ralph and Walker (2014) suggested that mentors and beginning teachers should be matched using what they refer to as adaptive mentorship. The matching is based upon the participants’ conceptualizations of the mentoring process. Pre-made questions were posed to both the mentors and the beginning teachers, and the matches were based upon the answers to the questions. Ralph and Walker concluded their study by stating that matched mentors and beginning teachers appeared to build better relationships between the pairs, and this relationship resulted in beginning teachers who felt more prepared for the duties required for the classroom.

Administrative support is another important component of an effective mentoring program. Hughes, Matt, and O’Reilly (2014) suggested principals should take the opportunity to create and maintain a positive school culture and climate and positive supports that will ultimately help reduce the teacher attrition rate. This is especially important in hard-to-staff schools. Principals must understand this needed support for their teachers. Administrators need
to provide the mentor and beginning teachers time to meet, to collaborate, and to simply converse about the many aspects of the teaching profession. A principal should be sure that there is adequate time for the important meetings between a mentor and a beginning teacher. A principal or administrator should be sure that mentors are free to seek out their own support when working with the beginning teacher. They should be provided with information and procedures as they mentor the beginning teachers. DeCesare et al. (2016) indicated that mentoring teachers are expected to meet the needs of the mentoring program in addition to all their normal classroom duties. This puts additional pressures on the mentor to perform their expected duties in addition to support their beginning teacher. This may damage the quality and quantity of time that the mentor and the beginning teacher spend together.

Additionally, according to Fry (2010b), mentors need to provide support for beginning teachers because the first-year teachers simply need “someone to be there for them” (p.204). There are so many challenges that a beginning teacher experiences, including situations of personal matters. The relationship that a mentor and beginning teacher develop over time can become a life-long relationship that will provide the beginning teacher with not only good professional advice, but also advice to help them become successful in life. A teacher, especially a beginning teacher, faces many issues that can take away from their primary job of teaching their students. All efforts should be made to ensure that the beginning teacher is provided with all the support that is necessary for their success in the classroom.

A study conducted by DeCesare et al. (2016) looked at the school district policies in Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota concerning their already established mentorship programs. The agency collected information about various components that made up these states’ mentorship programs. Some of the areas that were examined included:
(a) who provided the actual mentoring; (b) how much time was spent with the new teachers; (c) whether the mentors were required to observe the beginning teachers; (d) whether there was training provided for the mentors; (e) whether districts or schools provide stipend for the mentor’s work; and (f) whether there were other barriers that prevented the success of the program. The study was based on respondents from over 1,000 school districts in these states, including responses from superintendents and other district leaders. This study showed that mentors are expected to teach full time in addition to their mentoring duties. Only 1% of the districts allowed time for the mentors to work with the beginning teachers, and only 3% of the districts gave full release time for mentors to spend with their beginning teachers. Thirty-two percent of the districts provided training for the mentors before they began mentoring their beginning teachers. In this area, 54% of the mentors were provided a stipend; the average stipend being $476 per beginning teacher. This study provided a large amount of information that districts and schools can utilize to initiate their own mentorship programs. Other districts can use these finding to improve their already established programs.

These components can be combined to help the beginning teachers feel they will be able to function adequately in the classroom. Mentorship programs can provide these beginning teachers with many aspects they need to become successful educators, but also methods that can effectively improve teacher longevity and reduce the turnover, resulting in the creation of a better learning environment for our students.

**Perceptions of Beginning Teachers**

Many beginning teachers feel they are prepared for the challenges they will meet in the classroom. Unfortunately, this usually is not true. Armstrong (2011) suggested teachers who have recently graduated from university or college preparation programs are full of theoretical
information and eager to take on a classroom full of energetic children. These beginning teachers may be excited to begin their careers but are often nervous about going into their first classroom in their first school. According to Keogh, Garvis, Pendergast, and Diamond (2012), few experiences have such a tremendous impact on the personal and professional life of a teacher as does the first time they are in the classroom. However, soon the beginning teacher realizes that they may not be fully prepared for the full array of problems they will encounter in the classroom. These new responsibilities often translate into a daunting workload for the new teacher. In fact, this lack of adequate preparation is one of the most cited reasons for new teachers leaving the profession (Armstrong, 2011). Beginning teachers feel mentorship programs should also foster the development of teachers feeling valued and respected. In addition, it should have positive effects on recruiting new teachers, teacher quality, student achievement, K-12 curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development of the new teachers (Armstrong, 2011). Without these types of programs, beginning teachers feel many of the insecurities they face are in the form of classroom management issues. Stress and a daunting workload along with time management (Armstrong, 2011) are issues that have not been addressed in teacher preparation programs.

These beginning teachers are also looking for a mentor that can provide personal support, recognition, remuneration, and support of the in-school peers—or buddies. Beginning teachers felt the mentorship programs would provide a support system that encompassed both the classroom and out of the classroom environments. Mentors, in their opinion, should provide advice if they are struggling with something, in or out of the classroom, and share their ideas and personal experiences with the beginning teacher. Martinez-Agudo (2016) found beginning teachers needed a friendly relationship to exist between themselves and their mentors. They felt
an open and close relationship would enhance their feelings of support. These teachers were looking for someone who would support them both in the classroom and with their professional goals. Another aspect of support that was mentioned in the study by Martinez-Agudo was the opportunity for the beginning teachers to work alone in their classrooms. The beginning teachers expressed they were more self-aware in the experiential learning and felt secure in the fact that they would be able to experience the classroom on their own, but later discuss their feelings with the mentor.

Without these support systems in place, beginning teachers lose the exuberance and enthusiasm that they initially bring with them. It does not take long for the beginning teacher to realize the experience in the classroom may not reflect the picture that was presented to them in their university or college teacher preparation program. These new teachers can become overwhelmed and disillusioned about the teaching experience completely. They become frustrated, and this frustration can be imparted to the students. The students will eventually also become frustrated, and the learning process can come to a standstill. This may lead a beginning teacher to reconsider his or her choice of professions.

**Administration Support of the Mentoring Program**

Hudson (2012) suggested that a teacher who graduates from a university begins teaching without much support and with the same responsibilities as more experienced teachers in the school. It is widely recognized that beginning teachers do need a huge amount of support in their first few years of teaching. Every teacher can remember his or her first years of teaching. Most teachers describe it as a frightening and isolated time. A whole school approach may be necessary so that other school staff can contribute their expertise and experiences to the beginning teacher. Administrators and school executives need to have input into developing
beginning teachers. The administrators have experiences that are unique to their position that can open an entirely new dimension to the beginning teacher’s experience and training. Though a mentorship program can provide the support that is needed to support the beginning teacher, it may require more support than the mentor teacher can provide.

Hughes et al. (2014) proposed it is in the hands of the principals and other administrators to create and maintain a positive school culture and climate. This is extremely important in hard-to-staff schools. Hughes et al. emphasized the importance of ample amounts of positive support, not just for beginning teachers, but also for all teachers. Teachers, especially beginning teachers, need to feel the support of their administration. Principals need to be the biggest supporters of the mentorship program and be sure that the mentors and the beginning teachers have adequate time to interact. They can provide emotional support, which has the highest impact on the success of beginning teachers. A mentor who is meeting the needs of the beginning teacher will have a greater impact if support is coming from the administrator. A lack of emotional support can lead to emotional exhaustion. Gadbois and Graham (2011) discovered emotional exhaustion was a significant reason for leaving the teaching profession. Teachers, whether new or veteran, are required to handle all types of situations in the classroom that may result in emotional exhaustion. Beginning teachers have articulated issues that may lead to distress, such as understanding the school culture and infrastructure, learning how to be an effective teacher, and working productively with the wider school community.

Not only does the administrator need to support the beginning teacher emotionally, there are many other ways that this support can be shown. According to Hudson (2012), working with challenging students can often lead to emotional exhaustion. By understanding this aspect of support, principals can try to design the beginning teacher’s classroom with as few challenging
students as possible. Challenging students may often be unpredictable and may come with documentation that may support that behavior. Carefully forming the schedules for the beginning teachers can help alleviate some of the challenges that the beginning teachers face. Hudson also stated that, “lack of appreciation and professional recognition from the public” (p. 72), especially parents, is also a big issue. Principals and administrators should be sure they always support their beginning teachers by trying to assist the teacher during parent meetings and any other situations that may become an issue for the beginning teacher. By supporting these teachers in the early part of their career, it may help them have a positive first few years of their teaching profession.

The study conducted by DeCesare et al. (2016) showed mentors are expected to teach full time in addition to their mentoring duties. Districts and administrators need to examine the needs for these components, such as giving release time for mentors and providing stipends for their programs, among others, and consider adding these to their programs to further support their mentorship programs. There are many challenges that prevent mentorship programs from being successful including lack of funding, lack of time for mentor/beginning teacher meetings, and lack of stipends for mentors. The study was conducted in five states (Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota), and the results were consistent in all five states.

Kidd et al. (2015) advised that mentors need to be given time to be able to adequately provide the needed time for the added responsibilities of being a mentor. They suggested mentors need to be readily available for the many needs of the beginning teacher. The responsibilities the mentor teachers carry on their own can cause them to limit the needed time that they spend with their beginning teacher. The results of these studies can help districts and
those responsible for district mentoring programs see the importance of the components that were studied.

**Program Requirements by the State of South Carolina**

To provide all students with quality teachers, schools must strive to improve the professional skills and the retention rate of beginning teachers. To build strong school communities that can improve student achievement, schools must develop programs that support beginning teachers’ continued growth as they learn on the job how best to meet the needs of their students. Research shows that intensive, mentor-based induction programs can significantly reduce teacher turnover and help teachers to focus on improving instruction (Division of Educator Quality and Leadership [DEQL], 2006, p. 1).

This is stated in the induction and mentoring program’s guidelines for South Carolina. These guidelines were developed in 2006 and were then disseminated to the school districts. The program was designed to exist as a collaboration among the state’s school districts. The CERRA and the DEQL collaborated to form these guidelines. The organizations worked in collaboration with the NTC at the University of California, Santa Cruz, upon which this program is based. These guidelines in the South Carolina Inductions and Mentoring Program (DEQL, 2006) state that DEQL and CERRA need to support the districts in implementing these guidelines by: providing the information and guidance needed by the district, coordinate with each districts’ induction and mentoring coordinators, coordinate and arrange for selected mentors to receive advanced training, provide continuing professional development for all mentors, and collecting data on districts. This publication provides exact expectations concerning both the development of leadership in the programs and the program itself. The program encourages the school
administrators to carry out all activities that will support the induction and mentoring programs for their schools.

The program covers two different aspects within the program. One is for beginning teachers who are just graduating from college and are entering the classroom for the first time. The second section is for those teachers who have come from other school districts and have some classroom experience. The program for the beginning teacher is a two-year program. The beginning teacher is provided with a mentor for this period, who for the first year will provide the teacher with hands-on assistance. The mentor is required to work with his or her assigned teacher to develop and implement a professional growth and development plan.

The second year is more of a support year, providing both guidance and suggestions as needed by the beginning teacher. The plan is specifically designed to assist in the teacher’s transition into the professional world of teaching as well as cultivating the teacher’s individual professional potential. The induction teacher is one who has come from a different district and already has classroom teaching experience. This experienced teacher is provided with support to familiarize them with the procedures and policies unique to the district. Both the beginning teachers and the induction teachers will be observed by professionals in the district as indicated by the program guide and will either pass or fail this section of their training. A passing teacher will be offered a continuing contract, which will be renewed every year. A teacher who does not pass the program will be required to repeat the program once more.

**St. John’s County District Mentoring Program**

The St. John’s County Mentoring Program Guide specifically states it purpose. The purpose is as follows:
Our hope lies in the fact that we, as a profession, know how to lower the shocking dropout rates among new teachers and increase the quality of teaching in the classroom - numerous studies attest that well-designed and carefully managed systems of support and assessment can do both. (2014, p. 8)

The mentoring program is based upon the studies of CERRA and the information from the NTC at the University of Southern California at Santa Cruz.

The New Teacher Center (NTC) is a national non-profit organization dedicated to improving student learning by accelerating the effectiveness of new teachers and school leaders. NTC works with school districts, state policymakers, and educators across the country to develop and implement induction programs aligned with district learning goals. NTC induction programs include one-on-one mentoring and professional development, all taking place within school environments that support new teachers (NTC, n.d., para.1).

The NTC was founded in 1998 and was established as a support to mentors to improve the effectiveness of new teachers. According to the NTC, teacher effectiveness is recognized as the most important school-based determinant of a student’s success. The schools that need the best teachers are often staffed with a disproportionate number of beginning teachers. Many times, these new teachers may be well educated and enthusiastic, but they lack the experience to be truly effective. The goal of the NTC is to bridge the gap in the nation’s academic achievement by helping to provide quality, effective teachers. The Center believes that great teachers are made, not born. This Center assists schools and districts by helping them to develop quality mentorship programs that will provide these great teachers to their schools. The Center also
provides new teacher induction programs as well as training for schools and districts. There is also a large variety of literature that provides information and resources for schools and districts.

**Summary**

The mentorship program that was developed in St. John’s County School District was intended to provide support for beginning teachers. The program, which had its basis on previously successful programs, was successful when it was first implemented. According to the school’s district (2005), the attrition rates were as high as 55% in 2005. Upon implementation of the program in 2007, the attrition rates began to decrease, suggesting the program was attaining the goals that were set by the program. However, data is now showing that the attrition rate of beginning teachers in the county is beginning to rise.

The purpose of this study is to examine the existing mentorship program through the perceptions of the beginning teachers and mentors. This study uses the theory of teacher development and the adult learning theory as a basis of study. The mentorship program of this district will benefit from this carefully prepared study of the program by using the resulting data to help improve the program, thereby adding to the success of the program. I studied all aspects of the program, including the administrative support, the effects of the program on beginning teacher attrition, and the components of the program that have proven to be both successful and not as successful. The emphasis of the study was placed upon the perceptions of the participants in the mentorship program of St. John’s County School District.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This study is a single case study focusing on the perceptions of individuals involved in the mentorship program of St. John’s County School District concerning its effectiveness. The perceptions of the participants concerning the effectiveness of the program in the district teacher mentorship program provide me with some personal insights into the teacher mentorship program. The setting is a medium-sized district located in the southeastern section of the United States. This qualitative study uses interviews, observations, journal entries, and examination of documents concerning the program provides the information concerning the participants’ perceptions. The data collected and analyzed reflects the perceptions of the participants.

Design

This qualitative research study is a single case study focusing on the perceptions of beginning teachers and mentors concerning the effectiveness their district mentorship program. The research involves “the study of a case within a real-life contemporary context or setting” (Yin, 2014, p. 4). A single case study is chosen because according to Yin, this type of case study is “organized around a single case” (p. 240). The single case studied is the St. John’s District mentorship program. A case study was used to gain insights into the perceptions of the beginning teachers and mentors concerning the effectiveness of the mentoring program. The focus of the perceptions was the mentor-beginning teacher relationship, the development of the beginning teacher as a professional, and the time and resources provided by the mentor. The case study design is helpful in finding out the how and the why (Yin, 2014). The behavior of those involved in the study was not manipulated; therefore, the true perceptions of the
participants was studied. My distance from the participants was a prerequisite for the use of the chosen design since the teachers being studied are be employed by the same school as I am.

A qualitative research design was used because it uses “an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive, establishing patterns or themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). Interviews, observations, and journal entries were used to provide rich, thick descriptions of the perceptions of the beginning teacher, giving the me firsthand accounts. Also, the individual reflections of the mentorship program were revealed in the journal writings. The study also focuses on the analysis of the documents that were used in the mentorship program. According to Patton (2015), “a case study is an exploration of a case through detail, in depth data collection, involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (p. 259). All the above-mentioned sources of data satisfies this suggestion by Patton.

**Research Questions**

Teacher mentorship programs have been studied numerous times and have been described as programs that prepare teachers for the classroom and the many duties that will be present in the classroom (Cook, 2012). Although these programs have been successful in many districts, there is a trend in this district of increased beginning teacher attrition. I studied the effectiveness of mentorship programs of this district using the perceptions of the participants that were involved in the program.

My research questions are:

**RQ1:** What are the beginning teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?
RQ2: What are the participating mentors’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?

Setting

Geographically, St. John’s County School District is in the southeastern region of the state of South Carolina. The county has some unique characteristics including areas of great wealth among its residents, such as the ones who live on the coastal islands; however, it also contains pockets of great poverty among the residents. This area has one military base, which produces many transient families. There is also a large Hispanic population that is growing daily. The county encompasses 580 square miles and contains roughly 60 coastal islands. There is one public school district, which is divided into two expansive areas by a large river. This vast region is predominantly rural with some resort areas and a significant tract of undeveloped land (SCIH, 2016).

The pseudonym used for the school district is St. John’s County School District. The district is an average sized school district with a total of 21 elementary schools, 2 pre-K-8 schools, 1 K-8 school, 6 middle schools, and 4 high schools. The district employs 1,364 full-time teachers and on average has 150 beginning teachers each year (School District Website, 2014). The district is governed locally by an 11-member board of education, which also monitors the superintendent’s compliance with policies and regulations. At the time of this study, the superintendent had been with the district for five years. The superintendent’s focus is to close the achievement gap that exists between the different ethnic groups of students in the county and to attain high-test scores and student achievement (School District Website, 2014).

This is a rapidly growing community. According to SCIH (2016), the projected population growth for 2025 in this county is expected to be 202,000, showing a 25% increase in
population for the county from 2015-2025. This setting was chosen because this is a school
district that affects many diverse students who deserve a quality education from quality teachers.
Teacher retention, development of quality teachers, and production of educationally prepared
students is the focus of the mentorship program in this district. The attrition rate is extremely
high, in fact the highest in the state (CERRA, 2015). The future of the county and the state
depends on quality teachers educating and preparing students that will be an asset to society.

Participants

The sampling method is a purposeful sampling method. The specific approaches to
purposeful sampling included “the decision as to whom to select as participants for the study, the
specific type of sampling strategy, and the size of the sample to be studied” (Creswell, 2013, p.
155). Purposeful sampling requires using specific strategies in the choices of the participants. It
requires focusing on the part of a population that will provide me with the information that is
being sought. The sampling for this study was obtained from the beginning teachers and mentors
who were currently involved in the mentorship program of the district, which ensured that the
participants were experiencing the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). Emails were
sent to all potential participants after initial contact at the district mentor meeting.

The purpose of this research is to collect data from participants of the mentorship
programs being studied. This requires that the participants were involved directly in the
program. The sample size, according to Creswell, should be 10-15 participants in order to
collect the necessary data (Creswell, 2013). Contact of the participants was made through emails
and by me attending the mentorship meeting that is held monthly, beginning at the first of the
school year. The purpose of the research was explained to the participants. There was diversity
in age and ethnicity of the participants, however, diversity in gender was not achieved because
the participants are volunteers. The beginning teachers and mentors have no affiliation with me in relation to mentoring the beginning teachers or team members working in the same school. The identities of the participants were kept confidential.

**Procedures**

Before any data was collected, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought and received (see Appendix G). Emails were sent to all employees or former employees who met the requirements that I established. The details of the study and the requirements of the participants was included in the email (Appendix C), and the email included a consent form (Appendix D). Consent forms were obtained from all participants before any information was obtained. Permission to conduct the research in the county was sought and received from the proper authorities in the district office (Appendix E). Beginning teachers were defined as those teachers who had less than two years’ experience or teachers newly employed by the St. Johns County School District. Mentors were defined as those mentors actively participating in the mentorship program. All participant and institutional setting names are pseudonyms, unless otherwise indicated. The names of these participants were provided by the director of the mentorship program of the district, and I attended the first district mentorship meeting to explain the purpose of the research. Volunteers were then sought from this group of beginning teachers and mentors. The volunteers were provided with a consent form (see Appendix D) and emails were sent to the participants to further explain the purpose and procedures of the research (see Appendix C). The interviews were conducted at pre-determined schools by me, and I later transcribed the information from the interviews. Observations were conducted at the various schools where the participants were currently employed. The observations were recorded by me, and I made note of not only the exchanges between the mentor and the beginning teacher, but
also of the body language and gestures. Emerging common themes from the observations were also noted. The participants made journal entries at least once every two weeks describing their interaction with their mentors. Writing prompts (see Appendix B) were given to the participants to aid in useful journal entries. Document analysis was also used as a data collection method. Analysis of the documents provided an understanding of the purpose of the program. The participants were reassured that all efforts would be made to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The information from the participants was kept securely locked at my home and/or stored on a password-protected computer.

The interview questions were “open-ended and focused on the understanding of the central phenomenon of the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 163), which is the perception of the participants concerning the effectiveness of the program. The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis in a setting that was comfortable for the participant. The questions were brief but brought forth the true perceptions of the beginning teachers concerning the program.

Observations were also used, seeking to discover the essence of the perceptions of the participants concerning the effectiveness of the program. According to Creswell, an observation is “the act of noting a phenomenon in the field setting through the five senses of the observer, often with an instrument, and recording it for scientific purposes” (2013, p. 166). I took notes of the observations with permission of the participants. I then transcribed the information from the observations and the information from the journals of the participants, noting similar themes. Disseminating all the information that was obtained, findings will be shared with the district.

**The Researcher's Role**

I am a middle school math teacher with 38 years experiences. My career started at a small Christian school in the town in which I lived, and I taught for 28 years. I went back to
college and received my master’s degree, which enabled me to get my state teaching certificate so that I would be able to teach in St. John’s County School District. Because I was new to the district, I was required to participate in the district mentorship program.

Although I attended the mentorship program myself 8 years ago, I bracketed my perceptions so that I could examine the phenomenon with a fresh outlook and allow myself to hear and read the perceptions of the participants in a new perspective (Moustakas, 1994). I adhered to the constructivist viewpoint that stems from Vygotsky’s (1978) social constructivism stating that an individual’s beliefs and reality are constructed based on their own world experiences. I also set aside my personal feelings and preconceived biases so that I was able to discover the true essences of the phenomena being studied through the perceptions of the participants. I based my research upon a Christian worldview which allowed me to understand and appreciate the importance of the perceptions of my participants and the value of their perceptions.

The participants in the study were beginning teachers that had just entered the school district or those who were new to the district. The participants also included mentors involved in the program. There were no prior relations between the participants and me. The participants were not employed by the same school that the I am employed by, so there was no interaction between the participants and myself.

Data Collection

I used four forms of data collection to provide for the use of triangulation, a method to ensure the corroboration of information. The four forms of data collection included interviews, observations, journaling, and document analysis. The method of triangulation provided authentication to the common themes that were sought. According to Creswell (2013), in
triangulation, researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroboration evidence. Document analysis was also used as a data collection method to help with the understanding of the proposed purpose of the program. This gave me a basis on which to understand the intended purpose of the program. Data collection included finding individuals who had experienced the phenomenon (the perception of beginning teachers concerning the effectiveness of the mentorship program), collecting the data from these individuals in ways that accurately reflected the information shared, and recording and analyzing the data in ways that were useful to me and ultimately to the purpose of the research.

**Interviews**

To gain an understanding of how the participants described their perception of the effectiveness of the program, participants were interviewed using open-ended questions. “Qualitative interviewing provides a method for collecting rich and detailed information about how individuals experience, understand, and explain events in their life” (Turner, 2010, p. 1). The interviews began as I briefly introduced myself and a few informal questions were asked about the participants, making him or her feel relaxed (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2013) suggested good interview procedures should be used and “the interviewer should stay on topic, complete the interview within the allotted time, be respectful and courteous, and offer few questions and advice” (p. 166). The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to one hour depending on the response of the beginning teachers were interviewed. There were follow-up questions for clarification of the data when necessary, and the participants in the interview could review the transcripts once I had written the responses.

The interviews were conducted in three sets, depending on the role that the participant played in the mentorship program. The interviews contained open-ended questions. The first
research question pertains to the beginning teachers and is as follows: What are the beginning teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District? The questions and prompts are as follows (see Appendix A):

1. Introduce yourself and include such information as age, degree obtained, year of graduation, and number of years you plan to teach.

2. Briefly describe your participation in the mentoring program.

3. Identify specific mentoring strategies used in the teacher mentoring program you feel have helped you grow as a teacher.

4. What are the challenges that you face as a beginning teacher?

5. Do you feel this mentorship program is adequately addressing those challenges?

6. Think of some of the challenges you have faced in your beginning years as a teacher.

7. What experiences from the mentorship program have helped you the most in dealing with these challenges?

8. What do you perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher-mentoring program?

9. What changed would you like to see in the teacher mentoring program of this district?

10. What specifically did you learn from your mentor that will help of has helped your teaching practice?

11. Describe what you wanted to learn from your mentor that you felt was not offered by your mentor.

12. What do you perceive would be different if you did not have a mentor?

The second research question involved the mentors that were involved in the program and is as follows: What are the participating mentors’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the
mentorship program in St. John’s County School District? The interview questions for the mentors were as follows (see Appendix A):

1. Introduce yourself and include such information such as age, degree obtained, year of graduation, number of years you have taught, and any other information that may be relevant to your position as a mentor.
2. Briefly describe your participation in the mentoring program.
3. Identify specific mentoring strategies used in the teacher mentoring program you feel has helped the beginning teacher grow as a teacher.
4. Identify specific mentoring strategies used in the teacher mentoring program that you feel did not add to the beginning teacher’s growth.
5. How prepared did you feel as a mentor?
6. Did you feel that the mentorship program adequately prepared or is preparing the beginning teacher for the challenges of the classroom?
7. What challenges have you faced as a mentor that you felt you were not adequately prepared for by the program?
8. What do you perceive to be the strengths of the teacher mentoring program?
9. What do you perceive to be the weaknesses of the district teacher mentoring program?
10. What changes would you like to see in the teacher-mentoring program of this district?

Turner (2010) suggested the research questions should be “useful research questions” (p. 758). The questions and prompts prepared allowed the respondents to discuss their perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program. The information from these questions provided me with information concerning the overall perceptions of the effectiveness of the program.
Moustakas (1994) stated that obtaining descriptions of these perceptions through first person accounts is a good method of identifying perceptions of the participants.

The rationale for the first set of questions is to provide information from the beginning teachers’ perceptions. Question 1 provided personal information and allowed the participant to feel more at ease. Question 2 allowed the beginning teachers to give me background on exactly how they perceived the effectiveness of the mentorship program. Questions 3 and 4 allowed the beginning teacher to share their perception of the strategies used in the mentorship program and identify those strategies that were useful and those that were not. Questions 5-7 allowed the beginning teachers to express their perceptions of the challenges they face and how this program helped them to meet those challenges. This provided information concerning the behavior perceived by the beginning teacher that is involved in the development of a beginning teacher into a more experienced teacher (Moustakas, 1994). Question 8 allowed the beginning teacher to offer suggestions for changes in the program. This also allowed me to focus on the effectiveness of the program from the perspective of the beginning teacher (Moustakas, 1994). Questions 9 and 10 revealed information in relation to what the beginning teacher wanted to learn and did learn. This revealed to me the perceptions that the beginning teacher had regarding the purpose of the program. Questions 11 and 12 gave me specific insight into the perceptions that the beginning teacher had regarding what they thought they would learn from their mentor. This gave me a perception of the wholeness of the mentorship program, rather than just focusing on separate parts (Moustakas, 1994).

The second set of questions for the mentors has a similar focus but provided information from the perspective of the mentors in the program. Question 1 provided personal information and allowed the participant to feel more at ease. Question 2 allowed the mentor to describe their
personal participations in the program. Questions 3 and 4 enabled the mentor to share their perception of the strategies used in the mentorship program and identify those strategies that were useful and those that were not. Questions 5-7 allowed the mentor to share how prepared they felt they were for the program and if the program was preparing the beginning teacher adequately. Questions 9 and 10 permitted mentors to reveal areas of strength and weaknesses and allowed them to offer suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the program, if needed. This gave me information to compare to the information provided by the beginning teachers concerning the effectiveness of the program (Moustakas, 1994).

Opened-ended questions and prompts were used so that I was able to obtain as much information as possible from the beginning teachers. The participants were able to comment on their personal perceptions concerning the mentor program, the advantages and disadvantages of the program, and the personal recommendations of the participants to improve the program, if any improvement is needed. This information was then used to offer suggestions to the district to enhance the program. Interacting with the participants in a relaxed and informal manner gave me the opportunity to learn more about the in-depth perceptions of the participants” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116).

A beginning teacher faces many challenges for which university program does not provide adequate preparation. These new responsibilities translate into a daunting work load for the new teacher. In fact, the adequate preparation (or lack thereof) that new teachers receive prior to their introduction to the “real world” of teaching is one of the most cited reasons for new teachers leaving the profession. (Armstrong, 2011, p. 3)

Not only do these teachers need the support for the duties of the classroom, they also need someone they can confide in and converse with without any fear of being misunderstood.
“Mentors provide recognition, remuneration, and support of the in-school peer ‘buddies’” (Armstrong, 2011, p. 8). After the interview, participants could close with any other remarks concerning the program or any other topic concerning their perception of the effectiveness of the program. A few experts were sought to review the questions for the proper wording and validity of the questions.

**Observations**

I used observations so I could experience first hand the interaction between the mentor and the beginning teacher.

Observation is one of the key tools for collecting data in qualitative research. It is the act of noting a phenomenon in the field setting through the five senses of the observer, often with an instrument and recording it for scientific purposes. (Creswell, 2013, p. 166)

I was a non-participant but would have changed roles and become a participant based upon the interaction that occurred between the mentor and the beginning teacher. I observed the nature of the meetings between the mentor and the beginning teacher, the information discussed, and the attitude of the beginning teacher concerning the mentor. I recorded the observations according to the permission and preferences of those being observed (see Appendix H). I provided detailed narratives of the observation and took thick and rich notes. To protect the anonymity of the participants, I was the only one that viewed and/or listened to the results of the observation. The recording of the observations were kept locked in a safe or file cabinet. The observations took place where the mentors and the beginning teachers held their meetings, mostly at the school of employment for the beginning teachers. The mentorship program of St. John’s County requires that the mentors and beginning teachers “have regularly scheduled meetings to provide the beginning teacher with support and feedback” (Mentoring Program Guide, 2014, p. 10). I
attended one of the meetings of the participants and mentors. The meetings were scheduled to accommodate the participants and to ensure that I did not miss meetings. An example of the format of the observation is in Table 1.

Table 1

Sample Observation Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This will be information about the interaction between the mentor and beginning teacher.</td>
<td>This will be information that the observer will make concerning any personal thoughts or reflections.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptive notes contained accurate and detailed descriptions of what was seen, heard, and experienced during the meeting of the mentor and the beginning teacher. Quotations were included when deemed necessary. Descriptions included the layout of the place of meeting and the people involved in the meeting. The descriptive notes also included any type of body language that was important to the conversation between the participants.

Reflective notes were also included. These included any type of reflections that I, as the researcher, deemed necessary or important to the nature of the observation. The reflective notes also included any reflections in relation to my perception of the program as both a mentor and a beginning teacher. I kept a personal journal in which personal notes or comments and reflections concerning the observations were noted.

Permission to conduct observations was sought and granted (see Appendix E). The results of the observations were then carefully transcribed; special care was made to protect the anonymity of the participants. The information from the observations was then analyzed, looking for common themes throughout the observations that were useful in understanding the
perceptions of the beginning teachers. According to Yin (2014), the researcher will identify issues within each observation and then look for common themes. Upon identifying these themes, the data was grouped into categories that allowed the emergence of the common perceptions of the participants. Creswell (2013) discussed themes in qualitative research as “broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (p. 186). After these themes were established, the information was then reported, emphasizing the importance of the themes to the study. After the themes were established and reported, this information was used in determining the perceptions of the beginning teachers in relation to the mentorship program.

**Journaling**

The beginning teachers and mentors were asked to write journal of their personal thoughts and reflections on their mentor-beginning teacher meetings in relation to the effectiveness of the mentorship program. Journaling has been used for many years to record the personal feeling, thoughts, fears, and anxieties of the author. Some journals in the past have provided modern people with historic information. There are many famous journals that have been used to gather information about the past such as *Anne Frank, Diary of a Young Girl* and *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*. According to Hatch (2002), journal writings used in research, encourage participants to reflect on their experiences and provides “how individuals understand the social circumstances that they are involved in” (p. 141). This provides a powerful way for these individuals to share their perspectives. Journal writings often allow the individuals to share their feelings more openly because they are more comfortable with writing and do not feel the pressure of facing an interviewer. Also, according to Hatch, information from journal writings is very valuable because this information is coming directly from the individual participant.
Journal writing is prevalent and has been brought into the modern technological world by means of what is known as blogs.

The journals were used to obtain information that is more personal from the participants (Creswell, 2013). The participants were encouraged to make entries in the journal at least once a week. The participants were encouraged to include in their entries their thoughts, feelings, and anxieties concerning the mentorship program. The beginning teachers were provided with prompts to help frame their reflections (see Appendix B), such as:

- Reflect on how you perceive your interaction with your mentor helped you or hindered you.
- Reflect on how you feel your mentor could have acted differently in your interaction with him or her.
- Reflect on what your mentor could do differently to help you in the classroom.
- Do you feel that your mentor is providing you with adequate support? Explain what he/she could be doing or should not be doing.

The participants were asked to write in their journals after all their scheduled meetings with their mentors and after any other meaningful or negative interactions with the mentors. All entries remained confidential and the journals, when turned over to me, were protected by being kept locked in a safe or filing cabinet. I offered to provide the participants with journals unless they preferred to provide their own. Again, the contents of the journals were carefully analyzed and synthesized, looking for themes and patterns that assisted in the support of the research questions. Common themes and patterns were highlighted and carefully analyzed by me. Special attention was made to those themes that were reoccurring in the interviews and observations. These themes were then aggregated, and conclusions concerning these themes
were made by me. I then transcribed this information with the results being carefully guarded to protect the anonymity of the participants. The participants understood beforehand that the contents of their journals would be used in this research; however, the privacy of the contents was protected. I was the only person that read the contents of the journals and stored the journals in a locked filing cabinet and password-protected computer.

**Document Analysis**

Careful document analysis was used to examine the documents associated with the mentorship program. The documents included the most current program mentoring guide (see Appendix I) and any other documents that were used in the program. The analysis of the documents was used to provide a basis to compare the information received from the participants of the research. According to Yin (2014), “the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (p. 107). The program mentoring guide contains information concerning the purpose of mentoring, mentoring guiding principles, mentor roles and responsibilities, and program requirements. The manual also contains mentor performance standards, which clearly states and describes the expected roles of the mentor. Other documents that were included was the Formal Evaluation for Induction-Contract Educations form for both Induction I and Induction II teachers and the Collaborative Assessment Log. These documents are included in the program mentoring guide.

**Data Analysis**

Once all the data was collected by the various methods previously mentioned—transcripts of the interviews, the analysis of observations, the information in the journals, and the analysis of the documents—similar themes and observations were pursued. Memoing and coding were done by hand to develop the information into meaningful data to evaluate emerging
themes and trends. Memoing, according to Creswell (2013), is a process in which “the researcher writes down ideas about the evolving theory” (p. 89). Coding was then used to break the information into smaller categories of information, seeking themes that emerged from the detailed descriptions of the data. Categories or codes were adjusted as the information was examined and studied. Realistically, I was looking for three to five themes from the examination of this information.

The data analysis method used was based on Moustakas’ (1994) Phenomenological Research Method. This method includes:

1. Listing and preliminary grouping - looking for relevant perceptions and group them according to similar themes;

2. Reduction and elimination - this requires testing each expression to determine if it contains a moment of experience that is necessary for understanding the constituent and looking for overlapping, repetitive, and vague expressions that need to be eliminated;

3. Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents - this concerns looking for common themes that are at the core themes of the perceptions of the participants;

4. Final identification of the invariant constituents and themes by application validation - the invariant constituents expressed explicitly in the complete transcript - are they compatible, and are they relevant to the researcher’s perceptions, and should they be eliminated;

5. Construct an “Individual Structural Description” of the perceptions;

6. Construct an “Individual Structural Description” based on the Individual Textural Description and Imaginative Variation;
7. Construct a “Textual Structural Description” of the means and essences of the perceptions, incorporating the invariant constituents and themes (Moustakas, 1994, p. 120-121).

Once the interviews were transcribed, these transcriptions, along with the results from observations and journal entries, were carefully analyzed. The data was organized into similar themes that gave me insight into the perceptions of the participants concerning the mentorship program. Using the Moustakas (1994) Phenological Research Method, I used quotes of the participants to list all their perceptions of the program that were relevant to the purpose of the study, which was to discover the participants’ perceptions based on the effectiveness of the mentorship program that was studied.

Horizontalization was used in the reduction and elimination process. This process allowed me to use the quotes of the participants and find those that were relevant to the purpose of the study, identifying the phenomena, which was the participants’ perception of the effectiveness of the program. Horizontalization gave each relevant quote an equal value regarding the expressions of the group. Each quote was considered individually. Some of the criteria used to establish the relevance of the quotes included whether the quote was necessary and sufficient to the understanding of the phenomena and if it was possible to abstract and label this information.

Once this was done, the clustering and thematizing process began. This is where common and significant themes concerning the perceptions of the participants were sought and categorized. Once the perceptions were clustered and labeled, the themes of the perception began to develop. At this point, I validated the themes, considering if they were both compatible and relevant to my purpose of the study.
An Individual Structural Description of the perceptions of the participants was constructed for each participant based upon the themes that had been established during the clustering and thematizing process. This included verbatim perceptions of the participants. Based upon how the participants’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the program, an Individual Textural Description and Imaginative Variation was written. At this point, I also included my own personal perceptions concerning the phenomena.

The final step in analyzing the data was the final description that presented the essence of the phenomenon. This focused on the perceptions of the effectiveness of the program that were common to the participants. This was summarized in the conclusion of the study.

I used N’VIVO, a software that supports qualitative research to analyze the data. This software was used to organize, analyze, and study the data that was collected. When the data was inserted into the program as text, the program looked for and listed trends, themes, and patterns. This program was easy to use software, which is one of the main reasons that I considered using this program. This program confirmed the themes and sub-themes that I had established in my analysis of the data.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was established in various ways. “Trustworthiness can be thought of as the ways in which qualitative researchers ensure that credibility, dependability and confirmability, and transferability are evident in their research” (Shenton, 2004, p. 63). Triangulation of the data was established by using the various methods of data collection: interviews, observations, journaling, and document analysis. Member checks with some of participants were used to ensure the credibility. Member checks is a technique used by researchers to help improve the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability (Creswell,
All the data and the transcripts of the data were carefully stored and were available for any of the participants to examine if necessary. Prolonged engagement involves “building trust with the participants, learning the culture, and checking for misinformation” (Creswell, 2013, p. 250-251). Since I had been a mentor and was familiar with the district and the mentorship program, this was possible. I took much care to ensure the results of this study were trustworthy; however, I made sure I was involved only as an observer. All the following methods were used to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

**Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability is based upon the assumption of replicability or repeatability. It is concerned with obtaining the same results at least twice. To ensure dependability, I took careful notes so that similarities were discovered and made note of any changes that had been observed. During observations, I carefully watched for repeated actions during the interaction between the mentor and beginning teacher. Any similarities and differences were noted when interviewing the participants and when reading their journal entries. Dependability is, at times, hard to establish, but this issue was addressed by carefully analyzing and synthesizing the data for similarities and differences. The results were consistent and details were included to allow for dependability.

Confirmability ensures that the information can be confirmed and corroborated by others. I checked and rechecked the information to be sure the data was accurate. Member checking also assisted in ensuring the confirmability of the data. Meticulous record keeping was maintained, and triangulation ensured the confirmability of the data. Confirmability ensured that all the information was available if any type of confirmation was necessary.
**Transferability**

Transferability refers to the fact that the data from the research can be transferred to other situations involving the same phenomena. This was done by describing both the circumstances of the current program and how the results of the study were used to improve the program. Thick, descriptive notes were taken to provide as much detail as possible (Creswell, 2013). Careful attention to detail was maintained as the data was being studied and transcribed. Once the results of the research question were obtained, I looked for findings that were also applicable and helpful to other mentorship programs that may need improvement or to other districts that will be establishing their own mentorship program.

**Ethical Considerations**

IRB permission was sought and granted before any data was gathered. Permission was sought and granted from the school district, as well as from principals of the schools in which the beginning teachers taught. Participants were assured of private communication.

All interviews were conducted privately, and only I will have access to the information. The identity of the participants in the surveys will remain confidential. The information was password protected and locked in a file cabinet. All efforts were made to keep all the participants and information from the data completely confidential. The study was strictly voluntary and consent forms were signed before any research began (see Appendix D). Permission from the appropriate authorities and participants was obtained before any research was conducted (see Appendices E and F).

**Summary**

The research was a qualitative single case study that investigated the perceptions of beginning teachers concerning the effectiveness of the mentorship program in the school district.
The data for this study was obtained using interviews, observations, entries from personal journals, and analysis of documents. The data was collected and analyzed to find common themes and sub-themes that were able to shed some light on the perceptions of the participants studied concerning the mentorship programs in St. Johns County School District. Analysis of the documents provided a foundation upon which the effectiveness of the program was compared. Trustworthiness was obtained by using triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement. Credibility, dependability and confirmability, and transferability was addressed and maintained. All information remained confidential and the identity of the participants was strictly guarded. The results of this study provided information that could possibly improve the quality of the mentorship program in this school district and help these educators continue their teaching careers in the district for many years.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This case study examines the perceptions of beginning teachers and mentors in St. John’s County School District concerning the effectiveness of the county’s mentorship program. The chapter presents the participants, demographics of the participants, observations, journaling, the findings for the research study, and a summary. Upon my request, the participants provided information such as name, education, educational philosophy, and other demographic information. I interviewed the participants using pre-written questions (see Appendix A) and observed some of the participants during their interaction with their mentors. The participants journaled any interactions with their mentors and submitted this to me using prompts to help them begin their journal writings (see Appendix B). The participants consisted of a total of 15 teachers; 10 of which are beginning teachers and 5 are mentors for 5 of the beginning teachers. I observed five of the beginning teachers with their mentors (the same mentors mentioned above).

The research questions guiding the research is as follows:

**RQ1:** What are the beginning teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?

**RQ2:** What are the participating mentors’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?

I collected and analyzed the data according to the data-analysis procedures defined in Chapter Three. Once the analysis was complete, I develop a complete description of the perceptions of the beginning teachers and their mentors and present the emergent themes and sub-themes in this chapter’s summary.
Participants

A total of 15 participants, 10 beginning teachers and 5 mentors for beginning teachers assigned to them by the district mentoring program, participated in the research study. Ranging in age from 23-62, including 14 females and one male, the group demographics are described as 3 African Americans, 10 Caucasians, and 2 Hispanics. The teachers taught in various core subject areas, special education, and elective classes. The teachers came from six different schools geographically spaced throughout the district. All the teachers were certified by the state of South Carolina, and three of the mentors had National Board Certification. The grade levels represented by these teachers ranged from pre-k to high school. They were all employed by the school district studied.

Beginning Teachers

Charles. Charles is 34 years old and is a first-year teacher. He graduated from a small online university in Utah and is currently teaching fourth grade math and science. He is married and has four children. Previously, he worked various other jobs, including a job in sales, but finally decided last year to get into teaching, which he stated had been his dream. He believed, “Every child can learn, just at different rates. Much like Einstein said, ‘Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.’” It is evident that Charles was trying his best to be a successful teacher. He questioned his mentor on many things that he was concerned about in his class, and he and his mentor discussed these topics in depth. For example, he was concerned whether he had prepared his class adequately for the upcoming Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) test. His mentor assured him that his class was prepared, but he still insisted on getting recommendations for additional interventions for his class. When he came to the meeting with his mentor, he had a
briefcase type portfolio that contained various items, such as examples of testing, quizzes, and worksheets that he had been using in class. He showed these to his mentor, asking for confirmation that they were acceptable material to be used in his classroom. Charles brought with him a business-like attitude, including his formal attire of dress pants, shirt, and tie. Although Charles was comfortable during the meeting with his mentor, he maintained a business-like attitude with all his interaction with his mentor.

**Hannah.** Hannah is a 23-year-old first year teacher who is currently teaching elementary general music. She is not married and graduated from a local state university. Hannah believed “learning music is like learning a language, one must have a listening vocabulary prior to developing a thinking, speaking, reading, and writing vocabulary.” Hannah is a petite young lady who appeared to be unsure of herself and her teaching abilities. During her meeting with mentor, she asked her the same questions several times, needing clarification and assurance of the information that her mentor was providing her. Her classroom was sparsely decorated, but all the various areas in her classroom looked organized. During our interview, she seemed hesitant about answering questions that she was being asked, as if she was not sure how to answer. As the interaction continued, she relaxed a bit, answering the questions a bit more confidently. She explained, “It is really important to me to be a good teacher. I am passionate about music and I want my students to feel and embrace this passion.” She told me that she loved her mentor and that she appreciated her mentor-beginning teacher relationship thus far.

**Frances.** Frances is a beginning teacher in St. John’s County but has been teaching for three years. She graduated from a state university in a neighboring state and has both a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in deaf education. She handles the pre-k through 12 grades deaf education in the county. She is 27 years old and is not married. She stated she has a “love
for learning and a passion for teaching,” and she believes in developing a relationship with each child she teaches. When talking to her, I could feel her passion for not only teaching but also her students. She mentioned many of her students by name, and as she did, I could sense the love she had for her students. She talked about the various techniques and strategies she used with her students, and I could feel her passion and dedication to her calling as a teacher. Her pride for her job was evident as she spoke. She talked about the many hours she spent preparing for her interactions with her students. But even though she spent many hours outside of the classroom preparing, she called it a “labor of love.”

**Bailey.** Bailey is a beginning teacher who graduated from an upper state college and is teaching pre-kindergarten. She is single, has no children, and is 23 years of age. This is her first year teaching. She believes that all children are capable of learning. She wants to make sure that she is meeting all the developmental needs of her students, especially the social and emotional.

Bailey was opinionated and self-confident. She expressed herself, specifically showing no hesitation to answering the interview questions. Many times, she provided me with much more information than was needed. Bailey’s classroom was decorated elaborately, displaying a lot of color and themes throughout the room. For example, her reading section was decorated with characters from Dr. Seuss’ books. Her room appeared to be organized and I got the sense that she was in control of her classroom and students always. Bailey had much to say about her mentor and their relationship. She explained she appreciated the fact that her mentor was always available to her and she felt confident about approaching her with any question or problem that may arise. “I know that my mentor is also there to help me and that makes me feel more confident in myself and my abilities. She is always there to lend a helping hand.” She also stated she felt the district program was an excellent program and she appreciated the fact that the
district provided beginning teachers with support in the classroom. She added, “meeting with my mentor often helps me realize that I am right where I need to be.”

**Dawn.** Dawn is a beginning teacher in this school district. She has taught previously for three years at an overseas private school. She graduated from a state university in Oklahoma and is currently teaching first grade. She is single, 27 years old, and is new to the area. She believes it is important for teachers to be educated in new situations to be able to provide for the needs of their students. Her favorite quote is by E.E. Cummings: “To be nobody but yourself in a world in which is doing its best day and night to make you like everybody else means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight and never stop fighting.” Dawn stated the school and district were different than where she had taught previously, and she was glad she had her mentor for support. Dawn was shy when we first began to talk, but she eventually loosened up and began talking more confidently and freely. She, however, answered most questions with a limited amount of information, and I had to pull a lot of the information out of her. She stated, “my relationship with my mentor is what allows me to grow as a teacher. She made my first year here easy. She exceeded my expectations.” Although I did not interview her in her classroom, I could also envision it as she talked about her students and her methods of teaching. She seemed to be confident about her methods and was anxious for her final evaluation, hoping that it would reflect her dedication and confidence in her teaching.

**Evelyn.** Evelyn is a beginning teacher at this school district, and she is 23 years old. She has a bachelor’s degree in math and a master’s degree in elementary education. This is her first year teaching. She really enjoys her job and says she will be teaching until she retires, which will be, she hopes, many years from now. Evelyn believes that “in a world where you can be anything, choose kind.” Evelyn focused a lot on the frustrations she has felt as a teacher. She
felt she was not prepared for the challenges of the classroom and was grateful she had her mentor to seek advice from. “I was concerned about how I was grading work and how I was managing my class. My mentor reassured me that I was doing a good job.” She obtained her master’s degree with the idea that she may be better prepared in the classroom, but she stated she realized her mentor was key to this success. Evelyn teaches in a middle school, and she stated she truly enjoys this grade level even though it was a challenge at times. Her demeanor was one of confidence, and I felt she probably had a structured and controlling method of classroom management. She was concerned about class size; however, she stated she loved all her students and that they kept her on her toes. She added, “I was always glad that I could talk to my mentor about problems in the classroom.” Even though she talked about depending on her mentor for many things in her classroom, it was evident Evelyn’s mentor was helping to boost her confidence.

**Addison.** Addison is 24 years old and is a kindergarten teacher. She is single and has a bachelor’s degree in elementary education. She is a quiet individual, but her passion for teaching was apparent. She stated she loves her job and plans on teaching for many years. She revealed she loves children (her students) and hopes to one day have children of her own. She is hoping she can make lasting memories for what she refers to as her “little blank pages.” Addison’s classroom was decorated with bright colors, and I could tell she had put a lot of thought and planning into her décor. She had different areas in the classroom that were all inviting, and I can believe her students probably liked being in these areas. It was apparent she was organized, and as we spoke, she was storing some of the items that had been left out. Each item had its own specific place and she carefully reorganized the other items as she replaced each one. Addison was free with her answers to the questions and she spoke confidently. Her love for teaching was
evident as she spoke. “I love my mentor and I love the interaction that we have when we meet. She gives me such confidence and assurance in myself.” I was particularly impressed with the confidence she had in herself. She was relaxed and outspoken during our interview.

**Gretta.** Gretta is 27 years old and is a Spanish teacher. She has a bachelor’s degree in language and international trade. She also has a master’s degree in international business. She is excited about her position in the county and is excited about teaching in middle school for the first time. When I entered her classroom, I was impressed by the décor she had chosen. She had various posters and Hispanic artifacts that really gave the room a festive feel. I am sure her students enjoyed being in the classroom. She is petite, but a bundle of energy. Gretta moved about the room and performed various duties while we spoke. She stated her mentor “sat in my classroom and gave me specific ideas to address some behavior issues that I was having in my classroom. I was grateful for the strategies and soon felt I was doing better with my classroom management.” She described her mentor as full of energy and always willing to help with any situation that she brought to her. “My mentor gave me practical ideas that helped to cut down on my workload and I was grateful to have the advice and support of a veteran teacher.” When she and her mentor were observed, they both talked incessantly, sometimes talking over each other. But, it was evident the communication style was working for them and they were comfortable with their interaction. Gretta asked her mentor many questions and they covered many topics during their interaction. They both were comfortable with their interactions. Although their meeting had an entertaining air about it, they still accomplished much with their conference.

**Mary.** Mary is a beginning middle school teacher. She graduated from a college in Kentucky. She has a bachelor’s degree in middle childhood education, specializing in language arts and social studies. She moved to the area because she and her family vacationed locally, and
she enjoyed the area. She is 24 years old and is single. Mary stated, “the students are learning from the teacher, the teacher is learning from the students, students are learning from other students and so on and so forth. Learning never stops, even when the teacher isn’t teaching.” She said the following quote, by Leslie Knope, best describes her: “The sun is rising over a sea of love and waffles and possibility.” It is apparent Mary loves her students and her job. She talked excessively about how she looks forward to her students coming in everyday and she tries to make them feel welcome and comfortable in her classroom. She says she stands outside the door and greets them as they come in every day.

I look forward to my interactions with my mentor. She has taught me to always take my time when completing things. I tend to rush through things. She told me that it always better to get it done right instead of rushing through it and having to teach it again.

She told me she wanted to be a teacher since she was small and that she looks forward to coming to work every day.

Danielle. Danielle is 26 years old and is an elementary teacher. She is a single mom and plans to teach until she retires. She is energetic and says she has always wanted to be a teacher. She attended the district career fair and was excited when they called her and offered her a position. She stated she absolutely loves what she does and hopes to work as a mentor with other beginning teachers later in her career. Her son is the highlight of her life, but she states she also loves what she refers to as “her kids.” Danielle talked about how she struggled with managing her work both inside and outside her classroom.

I have come to terms with the fact that there will always be something to do. My mentor gave me suggestions on how to manage the work load and that sometimes you just must
put somethings off for the next day. She said you do not always have to finish things the same day.

I could tell while I was interviewing her that she had other things she needed to do and was brief with her answers to my questions. She spoke several times about how helpful her mentor was and that she really appreciated the help she gave her.

I struggle with differentiation because I have so many students with so many different needs. My mentor sat with me and we came up with plans to address the issue. I found that as the year progressed, I became more confident in this area.

It was evident Danielle did not have much self-confidence, but she stated she was glad she could lean on her mentor when she needed advice or support. Danielle talked a lot about her son, and it was apparent that he was the center of her life. She told me it was because of her son that she became a teacher. “I wanted to make a difference in my son’s life, but also in the lives of other children.”

**Mentors**

**Jane.** Jane is 62 years old and has been teaching for 18 years. She has been in the district mentoring program for 10 years. She has a degree in early childhood and has been teaching ELA for 18 years. She says she enjoys being a mentor and hopes to continue in the program as a mentor for many years. Jane is a self-confident teacher, and it was evident she was comfortable with her interaction with her beginning teacher. Jane was quick to give her teacher advice and suggestions when asked for help, but she had a gentle demeanor, which really helped her beginning teacher relax during their interaction. She was soft-spoken and was careful to let her beginning teacher do most of the talking. She only spoke when she was asked a question, and she always answered in a professional manner. Mary, the beginning teacher, was talkative and
her personality was a bit more exuberant than Jane’s. Although they have opposite personalities, it is evident the pairing of these two was successful and they were both comfortable with each other. Jane stated, “I always try to make my mentee comfortable and I always try to be available when she needs me.”

**Katie.** Katie is 40 years old and has taught for 13 years. She has a master’s degree in education and teaches middle school ELA. She has worked in the mentor program for five years and has participated in all training and assessment programs that the district has offered. Katie is energetic, and she commanded her meeting with Gretta, her beginning teacher, with confidence and preciseness. Katie appeared to be a wealth of information, offering her beginning teacher many suggestions and solutions for the questions that she asked. Katie is also a trained social worker and stated this has helped her both with her interaction with her beginning teacher and with her own students. Katie’s petite frame suggests she may be quiet and shy, but she was not either of these. Her business-like and almost pushy attitude commanded the meeting with her beginning teacher, and they quickly covered all the required items. Although she was domineering, she was careful to listen to her beginning teacher and offer her answers and advice as was she was asked questions. Katie articulated,

> I think matching a mentee with an appropriate mentor is the most important thing. It is easier to form a relationship with someone you see daily and have similar grade levels and teach the same content area. It helps the mentor to appropriately guide the mentee.

It is apparent that this mentor has a good relationship with her beginning teacher.

**Michelle.** Michelle has been teaching for 10 years and has a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education and a master’s degree in elementary math. She has been in the mentoring program for about five years and enjoys the interaction she has with beginning teachers. She is
currently teaching in an elementary school. Michelle’s beginning teacher, Hannah, was unsure of herself during their interaction but Michelle’s quiet and calming demeanor helped to make Hannah feel more comfortable. It was also evident that Michelle was patient because her beginning teacher asked her the same questions several times, needing clarification and assurance of the information that was being provided. Michelle answered her questions and tried to make sure that her beginning teacher completely understood the answers. Michelle stated in her interview that forming a relationship with the beginning teacher was important and it was evident she was doing her best to form an appropriate relationship with her beginning teacher.

**Paige.** Paige is 40 years old and has a bachelor’s degree in elementary education. She also has a master’s degree in gifted education. She has been teaching for 22 years; 20 of those have been in this district. She has spent 15 years mentoring and evaluating teachers in the district. She says she loves working with new teachers in the district and helping them learn their way around school. Paige has an outgoing and energetic personality. She seemed knowledgeable not only about the program, but also about her content area. She explained, “building relationships beyond the classroom is my best advice. If the teacher respects and trusts the mentor, they will be open about how things are going and will not hesitate to ask questions.” Paige was well-informed about the program and was able to share much expertise about being a mentor. It was evident that any beginning teacher would be fortunate to have her as a mentor. She stated she was concerned about the workload that a beginning teacher is required to maintain. She added she tries to offer suggestions to help lessen the burden of this workload on the new teacher. Her personality was calming and yet at the same time her energetic spirit was also evident.
Clair. Clair is 39 years old and has been teaching for 12 years. She has a bachelor’s degree in liberal studies and a master’s degree in elementary education with a specialty in language and literacy. She has been working in the mentor program for about five years. Clair’s persona was business-like. She answered all the questions briefly, but completely. She explained her administrator had suggested she become a part of the mentoring program, but she was not sure how good of a job she could do. It was obvious from her interaction with her beginning teacher that she is doing a great job. She says the checklist provided by the district is a useful tool and that “it keeps us both on track with the things that need to be discussed. It is a great resource.” During her interaction with her beginning teacher, she supplied him with some useful and appropriate advice. It was evident she was knowledgeable and had great communication skills when it came to sharing this knowledge with her beginning teacher.

Results

Theme Development

Beginning teachers’ interviews. For the analysis of the data, I used the steps of a phenomenological study as prescribed by Moustakas (1994). During data analysis, I followed Moustakas’ (1994) prescribed phenomenological steps, whereas I (1) recorded all relevant statements, (2) listed each non-repetitive, non-overlapping statement, (3) grouped statements into meaning units, and (4) synthesized the meaning units into themes. As I analyzed the data, I found several words and phrases that were repeated in the transcripts. These words and phrases were grouped together and developed into meaningful units or codes, which were later developed into the themes and sub-themes of the study. Table 2 shows themes and sub-themes that appeared in the journal writings and interviews of the beginning teachers. One major theme was the mentor as a teacher and assessor. Words, such as observations and feedback, classroom
manager, time manager, and problem solver, were mentioned many times in the comments made by the beginning teacher concerning their mentor. When Hannah was asked about the challenges faced by beginning teachers she responded, “Classroom management, time management, and maintaining a high energy level.” She continued that she felt her mentor was adequately addressing these challenges. Danielle stated she struggled with time management inside and outside the classroom and she added she could always contact her mentor concerning these issues. Gretta also commented, “Managing behavior in class and time management strategies are two issues I face as a beginning teacher.” She also told me she felt her mentor was assisting her with these issues. The mentors offered much advice and suggestions to the teachers to help them with challenging issues.

Table 2

Themes from Beginning Teachers’ Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher and Assessor</td>
<td>Problem Solver</td>
<td>Interview, journal, observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation and Feedback</td>
<td>Interview, observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advocate-support</td>
<td>Interview, observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborator-lesson plans, resources</td>
<td>Interview, observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom manager</td>
<td>Interview, journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manager of time</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Interview and journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trusted listener (Coach)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship-Personal interactions</td>
<td>Interviews and journal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another main theme was the mentor as a facilitator (see Table 2). The beginning teachers showed in many instances that their mentors also offered them a relationship that they could trust and use to share the frustrations that accompanied being a teacher. Danielle shared, I feel the level of support of my mentor is great. I know that I always have someone to go to that can help with anything that comes up. I feel that my mentor made herself available at all times.

Bailey told me,

My mentor observed me often and sent feedback immediately. I loved that because it gave me an outside perspective and allowed me to reflect immediately after a lesson and implement any changes. My mentor was very responsive to texts and would come to my classroom any time I needed her help.

Using all this information enabled me to discover the perceptions of the participants concerning the district mentor program.

The beginning teachers were asked to answer 12 questions so that their perceptions of the mentorship program would be revealed. It was the responses to these questions that I discovered the above-mentioned themes and sub-themes. The first questions provided me with demographic and personal information concerning the teachers. The remainder of the questions provided me with information concerning the beginning teachers’ perceptions of the program. The third question asked the beginning teacher what some of the helpful strategies were that their mentors offered them. Two main themes were presented because of the answers to this question. The first theme was the mentor as a teacher and assessor. Six of the ten beginning teachers stated the program provided them with helpful and immediate feedback from the observations the mentors
had conducted. One teacher suggested the “feedback was very helpful because it was very objective and was given immediately after the observation. It also was not judgmental and provided helpful information.” These beginning teachers stated they valued the information the mentors provided them with concerning the successful management of a classroom daily. Gretta shared, “She (her mentor) would sit in my class and give me specific ideas to address behavior issues and she also gave me strategies to tackling grading.” A second theme that emerged was the teacher as a facilitator. Two teachers mentioned they felt their mentor was offering them advice and strategies they had already tried and found successful in their own classrooms.

My mentor sat in on one of my rowdier classes and was able to give me some specific ways to help with the “trouble-makers.” One student seemed to be acting up more because he is a native Spanish speaker, would finish his work early, and was bored, Gretta shared. “My mentor recommended differentiating his assignments or giving him more challenging work. I tried this and it worked.” One teacher mentioned it was good to get outside suggestions. Evelyn articulated, “I learned from my mentor questioning strategies that can turn a negative situation into a learning situation.” A sub-theme that developed under this category was mentioned by two other teachers—the relationship they felt with their mentor. Charles explained, “I am new to this profession and I have a mentor with decades of experience, so I gleaned from her all that I could. The program provided me with someone I could definitely go to in times of need.” They both stated they could approach their mentors with any questions or situations when they needed help. Only one teacher did not feel their mentor had helped them at all. Frances stated,

It was frustrating that my mentor teacher never seemed to have time for me. The only time she ever seemed to be available was during the school day, but unfortunately my
entire schedule during the school day was booked with servicing children. I feel it is unfair to me to have a mentor teacher who does not fulfill the services promised.

The beginning teachers responded to questions concerning what they felt were the challenges they faced and how their mentors helped them with these challenges. Eight of the ten teachers mentioned they felt their biggest challenge was classroom and time management. They all felt these were huge issues they faced as first-year teachers and their mentors helped them tremendously with these issues. Gretta told me, “Managing behavior in the classroom, time management strategies, knowing what is expected are some of the challenges I face as a beginning teacher. My mentor was always available to address any of these issues when I needed her help.” Dawn explained, “The challenges I faced was requirements to be on committees, multiple after school meetings, and lack of parental participation. My mentor helped me out with these issues by giving me suggestions on how to effectively use my time.” Mary stated, “I believe that the regular meetings I have with my mentor is very helpful. We are able to discuss strategies that are helpful to me as a first-year teacher, especially classroom and time management.” The mentors shared with the beginning teachers’ strategies and suggestions that helped them handle these issues. One of the teachers felt the biggest challenge he faced was financial, and his mentor did try to help him with some suggestions to try to help with this situation.

I am not a young, fresh out of high school-straight out of college-type of teacher. I have a mortgage, car payment, and a family to support. Although the program did not address these issues, my mentor was willing to offer some advice concerning them. Another teacher felt nothing her mentor did helped her in any way. “Some challenges that I face personally, as a beginning teacher, are developing personal relationships, financial stability,
The next topics covered by the interview questions were what the beginning teachers felt was the biggest obstacle they faced as teachers and what experiences from the mentor program helped them with these obstacles. There were many different answers to these questions, including classroom management, relationships, and time management. Time management was mentioned by four of the teachers as being a huge obstacle to be a successful teacher. All four teachers felt their mentor had offered many suggestions to them to help with this obstacle. Gretta revealed her mentor had recommended she did not necessarily have to grade everything and she should input grades when the students were working independently. Another teacher mentioned it was difficult maintaining a high energy level and her mentor encouraged her regularly, suggesting she do the best that she could. Danielle and Dawn both stated they were concerned about the process of differentiation and found this to be a struggle for them. Their mentors offered them helpful strategies enabling them to become better at this process. Gretta shared, “My mentor recommended differentiating his assignments or giving him more challenging work. I tried this and it worked.” Evelyn was concerned with the large amount of cheating and copying homework she witnessed in her classroom. Although this was not eliminated completely, her mentor did suggest some strategies that did cut down on this situation. Mary found it difficult to draw the line with her students between trying to be a friend and/or teacher with her students. Her mentor helped her with this situation and suggested she develop a “teacher voice.” Another teacher felt her biggest obstacle was needing a strong personal relationship with someone she could share her experiences with and felt her mentor was not helping her in this area at all.
The next issue addressed was the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the mentoring program. Nine of the ten teachers felt the program had no weaknesses. One teacher, who has been critical of the program, felt the pairing of teachers and mentors should be based on all teachers’ needs. She stated not all aspects of teaching were being represented with the mentoring program. She also felt the mentors should not be paid if they were not effective in helping their assigned new teacher. The nine teachers who felt there were no weakness in the program all agreed the program was strong in the support from the mentor. They all agreed the mentors were supportive in all areas and needs of the new teacher. One teacher even stated that she felt she was able to talk to her mentor about any issues, including some personal items. Mary stated,

The overall mentoring program is such a great thing for us first year teachers to have because a lot of schools do not have such a strong program like us. The program is very good enabling us to communicate with our mentors concerning any issues we face in the classroom. There really is nothing I would change about the program.

When asked about what changes could be made to the program, two of the teachers felt the program needed no changes. The other eight teachers mentioned two major themes concerning the suggested changes. One theme was the mentors needed to spend more time with their teacher. There never seemed to be enough time for the mentor and the beginning teacher to meet with so many of the issues that the beginning teachers faced and needed support with. Danielle stated she would like to see “more time for sit down discussions on performance. As someone who reflects constantly, I feel like the more feedback the better.” Evelyn shared,

I think it would be more beneficial to have more unannounced observations so we could get accustomed to more visitors in our classroom. I know this would require that our mentors spend more time with us but feel that this would help us become better teachers.
Then we would be able to discuss issues that the observations would bring up. But again, this would require more time.

Another issue was the new teachers felt the program should try to match their teachers with mentors on the same grade level and in the same content area. Many of the teachers had mentors that were in different grade levels, and this sometimes made it difficult for the mentor to relate to the issues the beginning teacher was facing. Gretta explained,

I taught 6, 7 and 8th graders, but my mentor only taught 6th graders. It would have been nice to have someone who was currently working with all the grade levels as I was. This would have helped with some of the behavior issues I was having in my classroom.

One teacher mentioned the fact it would be good if the mentors were responsible for the success and/or failure of the beginning teacher. She felt the mentor was not being held accountable for their interactions with their assigned teacher.

When asked what teaching practice the beginning teacher had learned from their mentor, one teacher said she learned what “not to do as a mentor” (F. Gray). The other nine teachers expressed they had received good teaching strategies from their mentors. These strategies included stating the purpose of their lesson plans, how to handle unruly students, questioning strategies, early intervention for readers, how to work with small groups, and arrangement of the classroom. The new teachers mentioned all the strategies were helpful to the beginning teachers and they were appreciative of their mentors’ suggestions. Bailey divulged,

My mentor reminded me that I needed to state the purpose of my lesson to my students and to remember to connect the lesson to their lives, their prior knowledge. I was taught this in college, but it was great to have these reminders because they are so important. I
honestly had a very fulfilling experience with my mentor and appreciated all that she helped me with in the classroom.

Bailey also wrote in her journal she was having a problem with her teaching assistant. She stated her mentor provided her with advice about how to handle the situation and she would even accompany her to the principal’s office if the situation warranted. “I was very concerned about this situation, but my mentor gave me some very good advice that enabled me to adequately handle this situation” (B. Willington, personal journal). This situation showed the mentors are not only advisers, but also advocates for their assigned beginning teachers.

When asked if there was anything they did not learn from their mentor, only the one teacher had anything negative to say. Francis felt there was so much that she needed from her mentor that she was not provided and her mentor was a disappointment to her. She explained, “Unfortunately I do not personally feel as though any specific mentoring strategies used within the program has helped me grow as a teacher.” The remaining new teachers felt satisfied with their mentors and felt they had been provided with almost everything they needed to be a successful teacher. Dawn described her mentor by saying, “she exceeded my expectations.” Hannah replied to the question, “I can’t think of anything.” Danielle shared, “I feel my mentor made herself available at any and all times-a first year teaching is tough, but I have learned so much and look forward to another year in first grade.”

The final question for the beginning teachers was what their conception of their first year of teaching would have been like without their mentors. The main theme that emerged from this question was they felt they would not have been as confident as they did without their mentor’s support. Only two teachers had different perceptions. Frances felt she would have been fine without her mentor. Charles stated, although he enjoyed having his mentor, he would have
found help from somewhere since he was the type of person who is not afraid to ask questions. Danielle said,

The targeted feedback from having been observed was invaluable. My mentor was great to rely on when anything small came up that I had a question about. We met often and I always felt like I could contact her with anything no matter how big or small.

Mary shared,

When having the meetings and observations with my mentor I feel like I have someone watching my back and if I need her to step up for me, she did. That support has been amazing to have as a first-year teacher.

Charles expressed this information this way, “The mentor program set in stone someone I could definitely go to in time of need, regardless of the nature of the need.”

**Mentors’ Interviews**

For the analysis of the data concerning the mentors’ responses, I used the same steps as I used for the beginning teachers’ responses. I followed Moustakas’ (1994) prescribed phenomenological steps, whereas I (1) recorded all relevant statements, (2) listed each non-repetitive, no overlapping statements, (3) grouped statements into meaning units, and (4) synthesized the meaning units into themes. The emerging themes are discussed below.

When investigating the responses of the mentors, several themes presented themselves (see Table 3); some are similar to those mentioned by the beginning teachers. The mentors felt they were meeting the needs of the beginning teachers and achieving the purposes of the mentoring program. The mentors put more emphasis on their roles as an advisor and support to the beginning teacher. They stated they knew from experience that the beginning teachers needed much support throughout their first year, and this was important to them.
Table 3

*Themes from Mentors’ Communication*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher and Assessor</td>
<td>Check-in person</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation and Feedback</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manager of time</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Trust and Respect</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship-Personal interactions</td>
<td>Interviews and journal</td>
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</table>

All the responses from the mentors were positive concerning the effectiveness and strengths of the program and there were almost no negative aspects mentioned by these mentors concerning the program. The first two questions provided me with information about the mentor. Question 3 asked the mentors about the strategies used that they perceived helped the growth of the beginning teachers. One mentor stated helping the teacher with the policies and procedures proved to be helpful. Two of the mentors felt the checking-in process was helpful. Katie mentioned she “really enjoyed the checking-in process” and felt it brought more focus and purpose to the meetings. Three of the mentors felt developing a relationship between the mentor and the beginning teacher was an important strategy for the success of the relationship. Two mentors also added respect and trust were also important issues that should be included in the relationship. Paige stated, “Building relationships beyond the classroom is my best advice. If the teacher respects and trusts the mentor, they will be more open about how things are going and how to help.” Two of the mentors felt it was important to offer suggestions to the beginning teacher to help them balance their personal and professional life. Jane suggested,
A mentee always has a teacher to confide in. The mentor is available to answer questions and make them feel comfortable in a new school. She can also add some personal advice to help with maintaining a healthy balance between her professional and personal life.

Question 4 asked about the strategies of the program they felt did not help the growth of the beginning teacher. All the mentors felt there were no strategies that were not successful and the program was successful at helping the beginning teachers grow as a successful teacher.

Question 5 asked the mentors if they felt the mentorship program prepared them as a mentor. All five mentors felt they were adequately prepared for the role of mentor. One mentor had taken a second preparation program and felt this helped tremendously with her role as a mentor.

Question 6 addressed the issue, questioning if the program had prepared the beginning teacher for the challenges in the classroom. Clair responded,

> I have been a sounding board for ideas, to get frustrations out, and I have also offered advice. I feel that I am supporting my teacher with what he needs. These are the things that a mentor should and does provide to help them become a successful teacher.

Katie stated, “the first year of teaching is always hard…I think the meetings with the beginning teacher regularly is very important and essential to the support of the teacher.” All the mentors stated they felt the program had adequately prepared them for the challenges of being a mentor.

Question 7 asked if there were any challenges the mentors faced that were not addressed in the program. One mentor stated the only issue she had to face was the fact of dealing with a beginning teacher who felt they did not need help. All the other mentors felt they were adequately prepared to be a mentor. Question 8 asked about the strengths of the mentorship program. All the five mentors felt the program did a good job training the mentors for the programs. They mentioned they felt the district was doing a good job supporting the beginning
teacher and the program was doing a “great job.” Jane sated it was great the “mentor was always available to the beginning teacher” and this is what helped the program to be a success. One of the mentors suggested maybe the mentor should be assigned to the beginning teacher for two years if possible. Question 9 asked if there were any perceived weaknesses of the program. Three of the five teachers felt there were no weaknesses in the program. Clair suggested it might be helpful to have an end of year meeting with all the mentors to discuss any successful strategies, successes, and challenges they may have encountered during the year. Two of the mentors mentioned it would be helpful if the mentors could be assigned in the same content area and same grade level if possible. Katie suggested, “One challenge I see is being paired with someone who is not on my grade level. I have had a hard time trying to meet with my mentee simply because our schedules do not match.” Question 10 asked for any changes the mentors felt should be made to the program. The mentors all agreed there were no changes that should be made.

**Observations**

**Charles and Clair.** During his observation with his mentor, Clair, Charles was comfortable in the meeting and in the presence of his mentor. Charles was dressed professional-like, including a shirt and tie. Clair asked Charles how his lesson on protractors went, and he responded there was a lot a confusion on the students’ part concerning this topic. Clair responded she had used a lesson with her class that was successful, and she would provide Charles with a copy of this lesson. Clair then asked Charles how his group work with the students was going. He replied they were going well, and he felt that a lot was being accomplished with the groups. Clair then brought out a checklist that is provided by the mentorship program (Appendix I), and they went over each item on the checklist. The meeting
continued by going over each item on the checklist. They then discussed when the MAP window would be open and when their classes would be tested. When the dates for the testing had been chosen, Clair asked if there were any other items that needed to be discussed and Charles concluded he did not have anything else to discuss. Their meeting lasted approximately one hour.

**Jane and Mary.** Jane and Mary are middle school ELA teachers. Mary teaches seventh grade and Jane teaches sixth grade. Mary is a first-year teacher, and Jane is a veteran teacher, having taught for nearly thirty years. They began their meeting with simple greetings. They discussed a project that Mary’s classes had worked on the previous week. Mary stated she felt the project was a success and she appreciated the guidance Jane had given her. They discussed the upcoming tests, and Jane offered some suggestions on how to begin preparing the students for them. They also used the checklist that was provided by the district (Appendix I) and went through every point on the list adding any clarifications or points of emphasis as needed. Their meeting was brief, but productive. Mary appears to be appreciative of her mentor since she thanked her several times for all the help Jane had given her. They concluded the meeting by scheduling their next meeting. Their meeting lasted 45 minutes.

**Addison and Paige.** Addison is a first-year kindergarten teacher, and Paige is a veteran teacher of over twenty years. They began their meeting with a discussion concerning the previous week and the activities that had taken place. The district schools had a lock-down drill due to the recent school shootings. The two teachers had discussed at the previous meeting how to approach this topic with the students. Addison stated she felt the discussion went better than she had expected. She also stated the drill went smoothly and she felt prepared in case of an actual shooting. The pair then began to discuss upcoming testing dates and methods to help
prepare their students for these tests. Paige offered suggestions to help keep their students occupied and quiet as students finished tests earlier than the other students. They mentioned how quickly the year was coming to an end and they both were looking forward to summer. They did not plan a date for the next meeting but agreed they would be in touch and set up a date soon. They discussed a few personal issues, demonstrating they were both comfortable with each other. Their meeting lasted approximately 40 minutes.

**Katie and Gretta.** Katie is 40 years old and has been teaching for 13 years. She teaches middle school ELA. She has worked in the mentor program for five years. Gretta is 27 years old and is Spanish teacher at a middle school. Their meeting began with the district checklist that is provided to them. After each item on the list was discussed, they both mentioned they and the students were excited about their upcoming spring break. In fact, Gretta mentioned the students were unusually unruly, and Katie told her that was normal for this time of year. One situation Gretta was concerned about was a personal problem one of her students was having. Katie told her she should contact the social worker and let her know about the student and the situation. Both Katie and Gretta were bundles of energy and they talked incessantly. At times, it was hard to follow their conversation, but this style seemed to be working for them. As with many of the other mentors, they used the district checklist to direct their interaction. After discussing all the items on the checklist, they concluded the meeting by expressing their own excitement about the upcoming spring break. Their meeting lasted approximately 40 minutes.

**Hannah and Michelle.** Hannah is a 23-year-old first-year teacher who is currently teaching elementary general music. Michelle has been teaching for 10 years and has a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education and a master’s degree in elementary math. She has been in the mentoring program for five years. Hannah and Michelle began their meeting with discussing
what they both had done over spring break. They also discussed how quickly summer was coming, and Hannah expressed she felt a little stressed about being able to finish up her curriculum. Both teachers looked at the school calendar and at what Hannah had left to teach for the year. Michelle assured her she would be able to finish the curriculum with no problem. They continued their discussion by using the district checklist (Appendix I). After discussing all the items on the list, Michelle told her they would not need to meet again unless Hannah ran into any problems. It was obvious from the interaction Hannah felt comfortable with Michelle as their interaction was relaxed. They met for approximately one hour.

**Journaling**

The journaling pieces were interesting and proved to reveal many of the feelings of the beginning teachers. The teachers wrote about how they felt after some of the meetings they had with their mentor. Bailey wrote her mentor “provided me with feedback, but it was all positive.” She also mentioned she was having an issue with her assistant teacher. She stated she had felt her assistant teacher was “very negative with her students” and this made her feel uncomfortable. Her mentor told her she should discuss this with her, and if this continued, she may have to mention it to the principal. Her mentor told her she would accompany her to the principal’s office if this did occur. Bailey also mentioned an incident when she had been in an accident and she was unable to make an important district mentoring meeting. Her mentor assured her she would be excused and would be able to make the next meeting. She exclaimed, “she even made a joke about it which made light of the situation.” She continued to write about other situations she had to face and how her mentor would provide her with feedback or suggestions for every situation. Bailey also described an incident where she needed some type of resource for her class
that she did not have. Her mentor called another elementary school to obtain the resource she needed.

Charles also offered his mentor journal. Although he did not offer the details that some of the other journals did, he did mention several times he and his mentor had a “great working relationship.” He mentioned he appreciated the meetings they had were always straight to the point. He mentioned that time was such a big issue in teaching, that he appreciated his mentor respected his need for time. Each of the entries were short but mentioned how they had discussed the monthly checklist (Appendix I) and then usually discussed whatever matters he was concerned with in his classroom. He mentioned several times how he appreciated his mentor and felt she made his necessary duties “a bit more do-able.”

Mary also provided her journal. She had many entries and provided more detail about her interactions than any of the other beginning teachers. In one entry, she wrote about a meeting she had with her mentor where they discussed a student she was having problems with in her class. This student had refused to do his work and she was frustrated with this situation. Mary mentioned she had met with his father, a single dad, and had tried many other strategies, only to fail to get him to do his work. Jane, her mentor, told her she might try to get to know him and discuss with him some of his interests. Mary worked with this student after school in an after-school tutoring program, so she tried what her mentor had suggested. After trying this tactic, Mary told her mentor “she was amazed about the change” in this student. Mary praised her mentor, writing she was appreciative of the help her mentor would give her. There were other entries where Mary wrote she would feel “overwhelmed” and Jane was always available to talk and offer encouragement when needed. Mary even wrote, “I am not sure that I would have been able to survive this year if it had not been for my mentor.” Mary mentioned more than once
her mentor was always available to share resources and advice with her. Another incident Mary mentioned was she had been using certain resources for a topic in class and she felt the resources were not accomplishing what Mary had hoped it would. Jane spent several hours trying to find Mary other resources. Mary was excited when Jane showed her what she had found and felt the resources would be useful with her students. Later, Mary stated the resources proved to be exactly what Mary and her students had needed.

Dawn was the fourth teacher that provided her journal entries for the research. Dawn’s entries were brief, stating only what had been discussed in their meetings. Dawn mentioned many incidents where she needed advice for situations in her classroom. Dawn wrote her mentor was always available to offer her sound advice and she appreciated her mentor was always available. She shared that at one point in the year she felt she was completely overwhelmed.

Requirements to be on committees, multiple after school meetings, planning, grading, learning state standards, and student behavior had me feeling very much out of sorts. My mentor provided me with useful advice to help me balance all of these duties. The advice given was not only during their monthly meetings, but also “whenever I needed advice.” Dawn provided a brief introduction, which stated she was grateful to her mentor and was hoping to be part of the mentoring program later in her teaching career.

**Document Analysis**

Document analysis was used to understand that actual purpose and requirements of the program based upon the Mentoring Program Guide.

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative
research, document analysis requires data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge. (Bowen, 2009, p.1)

The mentorship program in St. John’s County began in 2007 and is based upon the studies of CERRA and the information from the NTC at the University of Southern California at Santa Cruz. The program guide (see Appendix J) states many of the materials contained within the guide are based upon the work of CERRA and the NTC of Santa Cruz. The current program guide was revised in August 2014. The table of contents states the program guide includes description of the program, mentor performance standards, an appendix which includes a copy of the District Mentoring Team Contract, and other tools that are needed for the program. The first section of the program guide lists the mentor’s roles and responsibilities and describes how mentoring is different for a first-year teacher and a teacher who is new to St. John’s County. The requirements of the program are also listed in this section. The guide states there are mentoring surveys that will be sent out periodically as a form of reflection and accountability. The results of the surveys will also provide, according to the guide, a means to be sure the needs of the beginning teachers are being met. There are scheduled meetings the beginning teachers are required to attend to provide support and feedback for the new teachers. A mentoring contract is provided that asks the beginning teachers to sign to represent their commitment to their mentor and the program. It is stated the beginning teacher and mentor may withdraw from the contract and relationship at any time. A fourth requirement is a Mentor Assurance Form, which assures the mentor will receive compensation in the form of payment or recertification credits.

The Mentoring Program Guide contains the Mentor Performance Standards, which state specifically what is expected of a mentor who participates in the program (Mentoring Program Guide, 2014, p.14-15). Among some of the characteristics mentioned include a mentor should
be an advocate, an assessor, a coach, a collaborator, a facilitator, a learner, a problem solver, a resource, a teacher, and a trusted listener. There are specific descriptions and duties for each one of these descriptions.

Also included in this program guide are the Mentor Tools that are, according to the guide, “critical for mentors to work with teachers” (Mentoring Program Guide, 2014, p. 11). The Collaborative Assessment Log is a tool that records mentoring conversations and outcomes of the conversations. According to the program, it should be used as a summary tool or as a recording and focusing tool. The log includes places for the teacher to write what is working, what challenges and concerns the teacher may be facing, and what the next steps will be for both the teacher and the mentor. This is to be used anytime there is any type of interaction between the teacher and the mentor. Also mentioned in the tools is an Interactive Journal, a support strategy that is described as a “tool for building relationships and maintaining communication” (2014, p.11). This section also emphasized teachers and mentors should have ongoing conversations that will move the teacher’s practice forward. The last section of the guide contains words and phrases important to a mentor and beginning teacher and the definitions and descriptions of this information.

The program guide has a detailed and complete description of the mentorship program, the purpose of the program, and the requirements of the program. This guide also provides a complete description of the responsibilities of both the mentor and the teacher.

I found that the perceptions of the beginning teachers concerning the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. Johns’ County School District were positive. The mentorship program states its purpose is to provide the beginning teachers with moral support. As shown in the evaluation of the interviews, journaling, and observations, almost all (90%) of the beginning
teachers felt supported by their mentor and felt their mentor provided them with many strategies and methods required to be successful. One of the beginning teachers, Dawn, felt her mentor had exceeded her expectations. Eighty percent of the teachers felt the challenges they faced by being a beginning teacher were made surmountable by the support their mentor teacher gave them. Most of the teachers felt time management was a big issue for beginning teachers. These beginning teachers were provided with strategies and suggestions by their mentors to help them cope with this challenge. The program guide states that:

The intent is to instill in our novice colleagues such professional habits of mind that lead to a sense of professional effectiveness (efficacy), not discouragement. It is about using the language of professional empowerment; asking hard questions about what’s going on in the classroom and then seeking answers together; modeling and coaching the pedagogical practice that lead to student success; focusing on conversations on learning and student achievement; and demanding high standards of ourselves, our colleagues, and our students. As mentors and coaches, it is also about demanding environments and policies that enable us to do this work WELL and sustain our veteran teachers and our new teachers over time. (Mentoring Program Guide, 2014, p.8)

Based on the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the investigation of the artifacts that were obtained from the beginning teachers demonstrate the purpose of the mentoring program is not only being met but also being exceeded in many cases. The beginning teachers used phrases such as extremely satisfied and overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of their mentors when they were asked questions about the performance of their mentors. The beginning teachers expressed they felt supported when it came to the relationship they had with their mentor. They also described their relationship with their mentor as being comfortable and personal, which is a
goal of the program, according to the district program guide. Overall, 9 of the 10 beginning teachers felt they had a positive experience with their mentors.

**Research Questions Responses**

I used the following research questions:

**RQ1:** What are beginning teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?

**RQ2:** What are the participating mentors’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?

The first research question was formed so I could discover how the mentorship program of the district was perceived by the beginning teachers and if it was aligned with the program as described in the district mentorship program guide. In example after example, taken from the interviews of the teachers, the observations of the interactions between mentor and teacher, and journal writings, it is shown that the mentors are meeting the descriptions of the program guide by being advocates, assessors, coaches, collaborator, facilitators, problem solvers, resources, and trusted listeners.

**Teacher and Assessor**

Repeatedly, the beginning teachers mentioned how their mentors were available when they needed advice or resources and were ready to provide them with what they needed. “I feel that my mentor made herself available at any and all times,” (D. Carson). Gretta shared, “My mentor was always available to address any of these issues (managing behavior, management strategies) when I needed her help.” Jane stated it was great that the “mentors were always available to the beginning teachers.” Danielle added, “I feel the level of support of my mentor is great. I know that I always have someone to go to that can help with anything that comes up.” Charles explained, “my mentor was always willing to provide offer some advice.” Mary shared,
“I believe the meetings the district had for induction teachers are helpful. Strategies that are helpful from other mentors and strategies that have been used in the classroom are shared with all of the new teachers.” “This collaboration is very helpful,” she added. Evelyn declared, “I really loved the observations with the frequent feedback. We had discussions about problems in the classroom and how to remedy these issues.”

This description of the mentors continued with Bailey’s comments. She commented that her mentor “observed me often and sent feedback immediately. I loved that because it gave me an outside perspective and allowed me to reflect immediately after a lesson and think of and/or implement any changes.” Evelyn shared that her mentor always provided her with “frequent feedback after observations. They had many discussions about problems in the classroom and how to remedy these issues.” Hannah shared she felt the classroom and time management were the biggest issues faced by beginning teachers and her mentor had “adequately addressed these challenges.” Gretta stated her biggest obstacle she faced was “managing everything that must be done-lesson planning, grading, all those meetings and PD’s (professional development). My mentor gave me practical ideas of how to cut down on the work load and manage her time more efficiently.”

**Teacher as Facilitator**

The teacher as a facilitator was the second theme that was presented in the analysis of the data. Mary stated her mentor was always available to her to share resources and advice with her. Hannah shared her mentor “provided me with classroom management skills and she was very encouraging, which helped with my own confidence.” Mary mentioned in her journal there were many times she would feel “overwhelmed and Jane (her mentor) was always available to talk to me and offer me encouragement when I needed it.” Danielle articulated, “It has been great to
lean on my mentor. I like the level of support that is provided. I always know I can go to her with anything that comes up.” Addison expressed she always felt supported by her mentor and that she was able to discuss any of her problems with her. “I had some personal problems that I needed help with and my mentor allowed me to share them with her and help me get a different perspective on things,” Addison shared. Danielle also mentioned her mentor was never judgmental and she always felt comfortable talking to her. “I always felt my mentor and I had a good working relationship.”

The district mentoring program guide states:

a mentor’s role is multifaceted. Mentors flow between all these roles to support the professional development of beginning teachers. The overarching role of the mentor is that of change agent. Just as a classroom teacher accepts the change of their students’ learning, so, too, does the mentor take on the responsibility of moving a beginning teacher’s practice forward. (Mentoring Program Guide, 2014, p.10).

Overall, the responses to the research questions can be generalized according to the following figures. Figures 4 and 5 show the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the research. Series 1 represents the positive responses, and Series 2 represents negative response or no mention at all to the topic.
The second research question was formed for me to discover the perceptions of the mentors concerning the effectiveness of the mentorship program. All five mentors felt the
district program was attaining the goals the program had established. The mentorship program guide states,

the overarching role of the mentor is that of change agent. Just as a classroom teacher accepts the changes of his/her students learning, so, too, does the mentor take on the responsibility of moving a beginning teacher’s practice moving forward. (Mentoring Program Guide, 2014, p. 10)

The mentor, according to the program guide, provides “effective mentoring that is predicated on the notion of supporting teacher growth and autonomy so that the beginning teachers become quality teachers” (Program Mentoring Guide, Appendix J, p. 9). Clair stated,

I feel that I have had to deal with different situations throughout the years and the program’s preparation has helped me assist my mentee. Time management is a big challenge that beginning teachers face and I try to remember to check on my mentee to ensure that he is managing his time properly.

Jane described herself as a “check-in person for questions that my mentee may have. I explain building policies and procedures and help with long-term lesson planning.” Paige explained, “beginning teachers are always overwhelmed because there is so much put on a teacher. Having a mentor to guide them is a huge benefit to help them manage the workload.” Katie noted that a big asset of the program is that it provides support for the beginning teacher in all teaching areas. “I like using the check list provided by the district. The check list provides a focus and purpose of our meeting.”

Facilitator

Facilitator was another theme that presented itself in the analysis of the data. Concerning the mentor as a facilitator, Clair stated,
I have received feedback from my mentee that he appreciates the constant dialogue that he and I have. The training stresses the importance of building a solid professional relationship with our mentees. We are told that we must be sure that they are comfortable enough with us to feel free to ask any question. I feel my mentee and I have this type of relationship.

Jane divulged that although it was difficult to find adequate time to help the beginning teacher, “I always try to be available for the beginning teacher to confide in me when she has problems or issues. I try to answer all questions and make her feel comfortable in a new school.” Paige revealed,

I try to build relationships beyond the classroom to help my mentee. If the beginning teacher trusts and respects the mentor, they will be more open about how things are going and how they can get help. Setting time aside for the mentor is very important.

Paige also added that building relationships with the mentor is her best advice. Michelle explains she tries to take her beginning teacher out to dinner occasionally “so that she will be more relaxed and talk openly about both school and her personal life.” Katie suggested, “I think having daily contact with the mentee is very important. It is easier to form a relationship with someone you see daily instead of sporadically.”

All the mentors agreed they felt prepared to help the beginning teachers face the challenges they were facing as a beginning teacher and the program had prepared them for these challenges. Katie explained,

Thirteen years’ experience in teaching helped prepare a teacher for the mentoring program. However, I felt more prepared by the district program and have participated in
all trainings and assessments that the district provides. I would eventually like to be considered a certified state mentor.

Clair revealed she felt adequately prepared by the mentorship program for her duties as a mentor, and Jane, Paige, and Michelle also stated they felt prepared by the district to be effective as a mentor in the district. Figures 6 and 7 illustrate the responses from the mentors. Pie charts represent the results. Note that the response from the mentors was 100%.

*Figure 5. Teacher & Assessor: Mentor’s perceptions - Pie Chart-showing 100% results in all areas. Information from researcher’s findings.*
Summary

This chapter contains the perceptions of 15 participants in the district mentorship program. This research was based on two research questions developed by me. The purpose of the study is to discover the perceptions of both beginning teachers and mentors that were employed by St. Johns County School District concerning the effectiveness of the mentorship program in the county. Interviews, observations, and journaling were used to discover these perceptions and the information was analyzed using steps of a phenomenological study as prescribed by Moustakas (1994, p. 120-121). The information was organized by themes and sub-themes. The beginning teachers and the mentors both mentioned similar themes in relation to the role of the mentor as a teacher and assessor, which established the first theme. The sub-themes that resulted included (a) check-in person, (b) observation and feedback, and (c) manager of time, (d) collaborator, and (e) advocate and support. The mentors mentioned these aspects were important to them when they were beginning teachers and the beginning teachers felt these issues were important issues concerning the support by their mentors. The beginning teachers also added (d) problem solver, (e) collaborator of lesson plans and resources, and (f) classroom
manager. The program guide for the district mentions many times these are important issues that need to be addressed as the mentor supports the new teacher. These attributes are included in the Mentoring Program Guide (p. 14-16) and are the basis of the Mentor Performance Standards.

The second theme presented in this research was facilitator. This theme was supported by the sub-themes mentioned by the beginning teachers: (a) trusted listener, (b) relationship, and (c) resource. The mentors also pointed out these same sub-themes. Again, all these attributes are in the program guide and described as performance standards for the mentors. Nine of the ten beginning teachers felt their mentor was providing them with the time, resources, and relationship needed for them to be a successful. All the mentors pointed out they were adequately prepared to meet the needs of the beginning teachers. “It is critical for mentors to have a variety of tools or strategies available when working with teachers” (Mentor Program Guide, 2014, p.10). The beginning teachers agreed their mentors had these tools required for them to become successful teachers. The district mentoring program has obviously achieved the results that the program intended to achieve.

The next chapter will include a summary of the findings, a discussion of the findings as related to the theoretical framework and reviewed literature, the implications of the study, the delimitations and limitations, and the recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

This case study examines the perceptions of beginning teachers and mentors in St. John’s County School District concerning the effectiveness of the county’s mentorship program. The participants consist of a total of 15 teachers, 10 beginning teachers and 5 mentors for 5 of these beginning teachers. An understanding of the perceptions of the new teachers and mentors concerning the mentorship program is gained from the analysis of provided information and documents. This information comes from the interviews, observations, and journal writings. Information is also taken from the district mentorship program guide. The two guiding research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the beginning teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?

RQ2: What are the participating mentors’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?

I collected and analyzed data according to the data analysis procedures defined in Chapter Three. Description of the perceptions of the beginning teachers and their mentors formed themes and sub-themes using Moustakas’ Phenomenological Research Method. These themes and sub-themes are compared to those mentioned in the district program guide. This comparison shows that the district program is accomplishing its purpose as stated in the guide. This chapter includes a summary of the findings, a discussion of the findings, implications, delimitations and limitations, suggestions for future research, and a summary.
Summary of Findings

During data analysis of the information that was provided to me by the participants, I followed Moustakas’ (1994) prescribed phenomenological steps, whereas I (1) recorded all relevant statements, (2) listed each non-repetitive, non-overlapping statement, (3) grouped statements into meaning units, and (4) synthesized the meaning units into themes. As I analyzed the data, I found several words and phrases repeated in the transcripts. These words and phrases were grouped and developed into meaning units, which were later developed into the themes and sub-themes of the study.

The two research questions that I used to guide this study are as follows:

RQ1: What are the beginning teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?

RQ2: What are the participating mentors’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?

The themes and sub-themes that emerged were grouped into two basic categories. The first was the mentor as a teacher and assessor and then secondly, the mentor as a facilitator. The program guide for the district program mentions the mentor wears many hats and has many duties that are required of them (Mentoring Program Guide, 2014). According to the program guide, teacher and assessor is a responsibility required of the mentors. The sub-themes that came from this main theme included problem solver, collaborator, classroom and time manager, observer, and advocate. The beginning teachers were forthcoming with using these descriptions of their mentors. One teacher suggested the “feedback was very helpful because it was objective and was given immediately after the observation. It also was not judgmental and provided helpful information.” Another teacher mentioned it was valuable that the suggestions offered by
their mentors were strategies and procedures their mentor had already tried in their classroom and have already been proven successful. Dawn described her mentor as exceeding her expectations.

The second theme that emerged was of the mentor being a facilitator. The district mentor guide states a responsibility of the mentor is to “conference with the teacher on a regular basis” (Mentoring Program Guide, 2014, p. 20). The perceived impression that the mentors were facilitators became evident from the statements of the beginning teachers and the sub-themes that emerged such as resource, trusted listener, and relationship. Evelyn stated, “my mentor has helped me talk through every challenge has that presented itself.” Danielle stated, “If I have specific questions about grading, parent contract, etc., I could always contact my mentor.” Throughout the transcripts of the beginnings teachers’ interviews, it was evident the mentors of this district have attained the goals that are put forth in the Mentoring Program Guide. Nine of the ten beginning teachers stated the program had no weaknesses and they felt the goals and purposes of the program were being achieved.

Discussion

The purpose of this case study is to understand the perceptions of the participants in St. John’s County School District concerning the effectiveness of the mentorship program in the county. Interviews, observations, journaling, and document analysis were all used to discover and explain the perceptions of the participants concerning the effectiveness of the program.

Research shows that intensive, mentor-based programs can significantly reduce teacher turnover and help teachers to focus on improving instruction (South Carolina Induction and Mentoring Program: Implementation Guidelines, 2006, p. 1). According to Ingersoll (2012), effective induction and mentoring of new teachers is a critical component of early career teacher
development and is widely accepted. The idea of teacher mentorship is based upon the fact that experienced and seasoned educators guide and mentor beginning teachers (Fry, 2010b). Mentorship is also based partly upon the theory of teacher development, which reflects the studies of both Katz (1972) and Fuller (1969). The theory suggests using activities such as workshops, professional learning communities, and graduate coursework develop teachers’ professional abilities. Katz (1972) extends this theory and defines a mentorship program as “the natural process of development which teacher undergo during their careers” (p. 1). St. John’s County mentoring program states as its purpose:

Our hope lies in the fact that we, as a profession, actually know how to lower the shocking drop-out rates among new teachers and increase the quality of teaching in the classroom – numerous studies attest that well-designed and carefully managed system of support and assessment can do both. (2014, p. 8)

According to Ingersoll, Merrill and May (2014), teacher mentorship is a method of training and preparing teachers that uses the knowledge and experiences of seasoned and experienced teachers to guide beginning teachers through their first years of becoming professionals in the classroom. The basis of the mentorship program is to take these experiences that are gained from seasoned teachers and have these mentors guide the beginning teachers through their first year.

When examining the responses of the participants concerning the mentorship program, one major theme that emerged was the mentor as a teacher and assessor. Words, such as observer and provider of feedback, classroom manager, time manager, and problem solver, were mentioned many times in the comments made by the beginning teacher when they described their mentors. One teacher suggested the “feedback was very helpful because it was very
objective and was given immediately after the observation. It also was not judgmental and provided helpful information” (B. Willington). The beginning teachers expressed many times they felt inadequate and unprepared, but their mentors provided them with the support and encouragement they needed. Fry (2010b) stated that beginning teachers who feel supported are more confident in performing the duties they are required to do to be perceived as successful teachers. The beginning teachers expressed the feedback from their mentors was important to them and it enabled them to improve in areas that they were weak. The mentors offered much advice and suggestions to the teachers concerning these issues. Hannah revealed her mentor “provided me with relevant information that helped me in the area of classroom management, time management, and maintaining a high energy level.” The mentors put emphasis on their roles as advisors and supporters of the beginning teachers. They stated they knew from experience that the beginning teachers needed much support throughout their first year and it was important to them to provide this support to their teachers.

Mentor teachers can also provide the experiences the beginning teacher lacks (Ingersoll, 2012). They can share with their beginning teachers’ strategies and processes they may have tried and share their successes and failures with the beginning teacher. Bailey stated, “I played around with a few different things (concerning classroom management) my mentor suggested to me and eventually found a process that worked. I felt I was really struggling in this area and my mentor helped me out tremendously.”

The mentors agreed that classroom management was an area beginning teachers struggle with, and they provided their teacher with strategies to help them out. One mentor suggested, “beginning teachers are always overwhelmed and the mentor is a huge benefit to help them manage the workload.” Time management was also an issue the beginning teachers struggled
with and felt their mentors provided support in this area. Gretta explained her mentor gave her “practical ideas of how to cut down on the work load.”

Problem solver was a sub-theme presented by some of the beginning teachers. Research by Kidd et al. (2015) and Meyer (2016) recommended that during the early years of teacher development, support from a mentor or another teacher will help improve the effectiveness of beginning teachers and eventually help them develop into more effective teachers. Danielle told me if she had “specific questions about grading, parent contact, etc., I could always contact my mentor. She was always available anytime I needed help from her and she always provided me with helpful solutions.” The mentors stated many times they tried to be available to their teachers whenever they needed the help. The mentors and the program guide referred to this as a check-in person. Mentor Katie stated having daily contact with her teacher was important to her as a mentor and she tried to make sure she was always available. Collaboration, according to Smith and Engemann (2015), is a critical component for the mentorship program in all areas of education. They suggested, “collaboration with colleagues offer an unlimited amount of information useful in making lesson plans successful and by combing strategies and methods useful in the classroom” (p. 162). When two or more teachers work together collaboratively, the focus is on the successes and failure of the students. This collaboration between colleagues can provide the beginning teacher with successful methods of teaching. Bailey shared in her journal writings:

When my mentor and I meet, we go over things for me to think about and things for me to add to my lessons. We discuss the goals of the upcoming lessons and discuss the ‘I can’ statements used to communicate with the students concerning the lessons. I appreciate the fact that she is always available to talk and collaborate with me.
Another main theme that emerged because of the research from the beginning teachers was the mentor as a facilitator. The beginning teachers showed in many instances they felt their mentors offered them a relationship they could trust and use to share the frustrations that accompanied becoming a successful teacher. The beginning teachers used terms such as resource, coach, and trusted listener. “I always feel like the level of support is great and that I always have someone to go to that can help me with anything that may come up” (D. Carson). Katz (1972) suggested the beginning teacher knows what he or she must do but is not sure how to accomplish this. The first year is important to the development of the new teacher’s self-worth. The beginning teachers described their mentors as encouraging, guiding, and facilitating. Charles mentioned several times he and his mentor had a “great working relationship.” Mary mentioned in her journal she many times felt overwhelmed with certain situations and her mentor was able to talk to her and listen to her, which helped her cope with the situation. According to the Theory of Teacher development (Ingersoll, 2011), support is provided to the beginning teacher so they will eventually become a successful teacher. The theory is based upon the fact that the individuals enter and remain part of relationships to meet certain needs. The need here is having someone in their professional life to be a coach, a resource, and a trusted listener. Smith and Engemann (2015) commented that when responding to beginning teachers’ experiences through writing reflective commentaries and engaging in discussions, the mentors acquire awareness and insight into thoughts, feelings, concerns, and anxieties of the beginning teachers. The mentor is then able to assist the beginning teacher in the areas that help is needed. Evelyn divulged her mentor “has helped me talk through every challenge that has presented itself in the classroom. She helped me vent my frustrations and helped me work around the challenges.” Dawn added, “A supportive working environment within my school is what helped me with the
challenges that I faced. My mentor was always available to discuss all my concerns that I had concerning my classroom and my work in general.”

Another aspect of the mentor program shared it can provide the new teacher with information about the school, school district, state standards, and policies that can seem overwhelming to a novice teacher (Mentoring Program Guide, 2014). Mentor Paige mentioned, “It is important to make sure that your mentee understands the school and district policies that they are responsible for. I try to make sure that she is aware of all of these policies.” Dawn shared that her mentor is great about reminding her about important school and district procedures and does her best to keep her on track with such issues.

Many teachers are entering the classroom with little or no experience with the many duties that are required for them to succeed in the classroom. Kane and Francis (2013) stated, “Today the quality of teachers is held to be increasingly important yet there continues to be doubts about whether teacher education programs graduate teachers that are ready to meet the challenges of their initial years of teaching” (p. 362). According to Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2012), most universities and colleges who prepare teachers for the classroom put the emphasis on the content area the teacher will be teaching and other academic duties that are not necessarily the actual responsibilities that will consume the time of the teacher. Fuller (1969) stated that information from a traditional teacher education program contains gaps in what a teacher will need in the classroom Fuller (1969) and Katz (1972) stated the traditional teacher program is not preparing the teacher adequately. They added that the education they receive only has a minor influence on what they do day-to-day in the classroom. Kutsyuruba, Godden, and Tregunna (2014) claimed induction programs positively affect beginning teachers with effective mentoring in the early teaching years. Mentor Paige said, “Beginning teachers are always overwhelmed
because there is so much more put on a teacher than any college program can prepare teachers for. However, the mentor is a huge benefit to help us manage the workload.” Evelyn explained,

The strengths of the program are that I get to talk about my decisions as a beginning teacher and either be redirected or reinforced that my ideas and concerns are valid. It helps me think more clearly and be more confident in what I am doing in the classroom. Mary stated,

The biggest challenge I face is that I am a brand-new teacher. I have never done this before and my mentor helps me to meet the challenges that I face by offering helpful and creative resources and suggestions and what to do if everything does not go as planned.

The district mentoring program guide is specific about the role of the mentor. The Mentor Performance Standards (Mentoring Program Guide, 2014, p. 14) are listed as advocate, assessor, coach, collaborator, facilitator learned, problem-solver, resource, teacher, and trusted learner. The beginning teachers have used all these adjectives when describing their mentors. They have agreed (90%) that the district mentoring program is achieving its purpose and doing it well. The mentors have stated they felt adequately prepared for the role of the mentor and based on this statement they consider themselves confident mentors. According to Ingersoll (2012), effective induction and mentoring of a new teacher is a critical component of early career teacher development. Paris (2010) confirmed this by saying an effective mentorship program can provide the components to help make the transition from college graduation to working in the classroom a more rewarding experience. Fry (2010b) believed the supportive element of induction can be important to pre-service teachers who are trying to learn to be collaborative professionals. The participants in this study largely agreed that the mentorship program that is
being used in the school district is meeting or exceeding the goals set by the program. As stated by Mentor Clair,

> I believe that the program has helped build a strong relationship between me and my mentee. We can discuss relevant situations that my mentee is being challenged with and I am able to share with him suggestions and strategies. My mentee and I have experienced many of the same things and we are able to reach solutions to these common problems. I also have been a sounding board for ideas, to get frustrations out, and I have offered my advice in all these situations. I think the program overall does a great job of preparing mentors so that they can assist their mentees with support for their first year.

(C. Cummings)

Mentorship programs, such as the one established in St. John’s County, are obviously necessary to the success of the beginning teacher. Although teacher preparation programs prepare teachers for many of the duties a teacher is required to perform in the classroom, there are gaps in the formal educational programs so that beginning teachers do not always feel confident to perform all their required obligations. Based upon the responses of the participants in this research, the mentorship program being studied is accomplishing the goals established by the program and is helping to prepare confident teachers for the classroom.

**Implications**

This purpose of this study is to examine the perception of both mentors and beginning teachers in the district mentoring program concerning the effectiveness of the program. The two research questions used in this study were:

**RQ1:** What are the beginning teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?
RQ2: What are the participating mentors’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentorship program in St. John’s County School District?

The focus of both questions and the questions used to interview both groups was to discover the perceptions of both groups concerning the effectiveness of the mentorship program. Also, the observations of the interactions between the teachers and mentors and a few journal pieces written by the teachers are included. This study has theoretical, empirical, and practical implications.

Theoretical Implications

This study has theoretical significance. It is based upon the theory of teacher development proposed by Katz (1972) and Fuller (1969). This theory states that induction or mentorship programs should follow pre-service preparation, which will ultimately improve classroom teacher practices, and teacher retention, which will improve student learning and growth. Although this study may not be able to show this program has improved student learning and growth, it has demonstrated the beginning teachers are well supported by their mentors and the teachers plan to continue their careers as teachers. Eight of the ten teachers interviewed stated in their demographic information provided to me that they planned on teaching for many years to come. They used words such as “more confident” and “better prepared” when describing how they felt after their interaction with their mentors (various interviews from teachers). The beginning teachers felt they were able to work out problems that were challenges in their classrooms by using strategies recommended by their mentors. In two cases mentioned, the strategies suggested by their mentors were successful in the classroom and helped make the teacher a bit more confident in their abilities.
The adult learning theory proposed by Kenner and Weinerman (2011) is also represented in this study. The adult learning theory states adults are ready to learn and are self-directed. All five of the mentors stated their beginning teachers were well prepared by the program and felt they were given the skills to assist their beginning teachers. The nature of the teaching position requires a teacher perform most of his/her duties totally unassisted and alone. If a teacher is not self-motivated, they will not be successful in the classroom. The mentors in many cases provided the beginning teachers with strategies and processes that had helped the teacher to achieve the goal of being successful in the classroom and more confident in their skills as a teacher. These strategies were provided because the teacher felt comfortable in approaching their mentor with these problems and challenges.

**Empirical Implications**

This study also has empirical significance. As stated in Chapter One, this program has not been studied since its inception in 2007. The results of the study have shown the purposes of this program are being achieved. Five of the five mentors and nine of the ten beginning teachers felt the program was adequately preparing them for their respective duties, and they felt there were no weaknesses in the program. I believe the one teacher who was not satisfied with the program was an isolated incident, and she may have felt differently if she had had a different mentor. It may just have been a personality issue, which is an issue that is difficult to predict. The program is obviously meeting the purposes established and the program is successful. This program will be an excellent example for other districts to use if they are interested in developing their own program.
Practical Implications

This study has substantiated the success of the program and this program can be used as an example for other programs. The mentoring program is based upon the studies of CERRA and the information from the NTC at the University of Southern California at Santa Cruz. The district used the information from these programs to develop their own program. The results of this study show the program has been successful in meeting the needs of the beginning teachers and preparing the mentors to help achieve this goal of meeting their needs. From the words of the mentors themselves, “The mentor provides the teacher with someone to confide in” (J. Simpson) and “I think that this program overall does a great job of preparing mentors to assist their teachers to be successful in the classroom” (C. Cummings). A successful program such as this can be used as an example and basis for other districts who may be interested in starting their own program.

This information will be useful to administrators in the schools in which these teachers and mentors are currently working. It is important for administrators to know they are being supported by quality teachers and staff. This study shows this program is providing them with the type of teachers that will make their schools successful. They can be assured the teachers are being well prepared for the classrooms by well-prepared mentors.

Based on the responses from both the mentors and beginning teachers, I would like to make a few recommendations that could help improve the program. The beginning teachers and mentors mentioned that, according to Jane, “It is difficult to find the time to adequately help a mentee” (J. Simpson). Gretta explained that, “Managing everything that must be done” is the biggest challenge that she faces as a beginning teacher (G. Jones). In the teaching profession, time is a valuable commodity. Even though there are planning periods built into a teacher’s daily
schedule, the time never seems to be enough for the duties that a teacher is required to perform. There are lessons to plan, papers to grade, professional development meetings to attend, and parent conferences to schedule and conduct. This does not allow much free time for the teachers to meet with their mentors. The mentor and beginning teachers occasionally do not have a common planning period. However, since there are so many other duties that need attention, this planning time is not always available for them to meet. Since relationship building is an important issue for the success of the mentoring program, providing time for the mentor and beginning teacher to meet and bond should be an important consideration. The program guide mentions that a successful mentor should be a trusted listener, problem solver, and advocate. By providing time for the mentor and beginning teacher to discuss issues, possibly even away from the school, it will allow the mentor to achieve these goals. This allotted time may also decrease the amount of stress since this time is specifically for them to meet and they will not be worrying about other duties they should be completing. The district and individual schools may want to consider allowing after-school time for these meetings and possibly providing the participants with some type of compensation for this additional time.

The background literature also mentions the importance of building relationships between the mentor and beginning teachers. A good relationship is one of the main strengths of a successful mentoring program (Martinez-Agudo, 2016). If the relationship between the mentor and beginning teacher is strong, then the new teacher will trust the mentor more and be more open to the mentor’s suggestions and critiques. Martinez-Agudo (2016) also stated that the relationship between the mentor and beginning teacher is one of the main strengths of a successful mentoring program. Providing the time and pairing the mentors and beginning
teachers with similar planning periods, content areas, and grade levels will help to strengthen this important relationship.

Another issue mentioned was that the district and/or school should do a better job pairing the teachers with their mentors according to grade level or content area. There are many differences in classroom management and lesson planning, among other areas, for elementary students, middle school students, and secondary students. Mentors who are in elementary school may not be able to provide appropriate advice for the middle or high school teacher. Katie felt that “matching the mentor with the mentee is very important” (K. White). She went on to say that it would be great to be paired with a mentor that was teaching the same subject or on the same grade level. Mary stated if her mentor was on the same hallway, it would give them more opportunities to meet. Another beginning teacher said she could not always get answers from her mentor concerning content since they were not teaching the same grade level. She did say, however, that her mentor was always willing to find the solutions to her problems. Again, this issue can have a big impact on allowing the mentor and beginning teacher to build the type of relationship that allows the beginning teacher to develop into a successful teacher. A better job of pairing the mentor and beginning teacher on this basis may help with this issue.

This research, using the information provided by the participants, has shown the district mentoring program has been successful at preparing new teachers with information, strategies, and support that has helped them begin to become successful teachers in the classroom. The program has prepared mentors that can support and guide these beginning teachers so they will be able to become teachers who will educate and inspire young learners. The policies and requirements established by the program can be used in other school districts that have a desire to establish their own mentorship programs.
Limitations and Delimitations

This study was conducted in an average sized school district. The opportunity of participating in the program was presented to all new teachers and mentors in the district program. According to the information from the county, there are 560 state certified mentors, but not all are currently participating in the district program. There are 170 beginning teachers in the county (information from the district mentoring coordinator). For this study, 10 teachers and 5 mentors volunteered to participate in the program. The volunteers were from six different schools, which were scattered geographically throughout the district. The only delimitations that were established prior to research were that the volunteers must be employed by St. John’s County and they must be actively participating in the district mentoring program. The limitations to the research included the lack of diversity in the demographics of the participants and the low response rate in the journaling of the beginning teaches. I had hoped the demographics would be more diverse than it was. The participants consisted of 1 male and 14 females, 3 African-Americans, 10 Caucasians, and 2 Hispanics. Although this could have been more diverse, the participants were strictly volunteer, and I had no control concerning the descriptions of the demographics. The results of the study were based upon the interviews, the observations, and the journaling of the participants. Although the interviews and observations provided a wealth of information for this study, the participants did not provide as much information in their journaling pieces as I had hoped.

Recommendations for Future Research

The research that was conducted provided a large amount of information concerning the perceptions of the participants concerning the effectiveness of the district mentoring program. However, it may have been useful if the research included the effect the teachers had on the
growth of their students. This research would probably have to be done over a 2-year period to see the effects of the beginning teacher on student academic growth. Mentorship programs are based upon the theory of teacher development proposed by Katz (1972) and Fuller (1969). This theory states induction or mentorship programs should follow pre-service preparation, which will ultimately improve teacher practices and teacher retention, which will improve student learning and growth. Studying the effects of the beginning teacher on student growth could show another component of the program and another aspect of the effectiveness of the program.

Also mentioned in this theory is the improvement of teacher retention. This could be a topic of research that could again study the effects of the program on this topic, which has been a big issue in educational arenas. Early attrition from the teaching profession is a major factor behind the shortages of teachers, but it is often overlooked (Ingersoll, Merrill, and May, 2014). Though all professions experience some form of attrition, the teaching field seems to have an increasing rate of attrition exhibiting high levels of teacher shortages (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). Teacher turnover is a major barrier to student success in school districts (Bland et al., 2014). Both topics for future research could provide some valuable information useful to the field of education.

Future research on this topic could include a larger group of participants, which may allow for more diversity in the participants. A larger group of both mentors and beginning teachers may or may not provide more or different information on this topic.

**Summary**

In conclusion, the most important fact established by the results of this research is that in the perspective of both the beginning teachers and their mentors, the district mentoring program is effective in preparing the beginning teachers to become successful classroom teachers. The
theory of teacher development proposed by Katz (1972) and Fuller (1969) states pre-service should follow formal preparation for the teacher. A prepared teacher will be a successful teacher in the classroom and will feel supported and confident to do their job successfully. The mentors in this study stated they felt well prepared for the job they were trained for and the beginning teachers were being well prepared because of their intervention. “I felt confident in mentoring because of the strategies that the mentorship training offered me,” Clair stated. The beginning teachers also agreed they felt confident and self-assured in their skills as a teacher because of the support that was provided to them by their mentors. “It (discussions with my mentor) helps me think more clearly and be more confident in what I am doing in the classroom,” Evelyn noted.

The adult learning theory proposed by Kenner and Weinerman (2011) was also supported by this study because it demonstrated the beginning teachers were self-directed and found it important to seek the help of their mentor when help was needed.

This study has also provided the district with the evidence the program is successful and achieving the stated purposes of the program. A large majority of the beginning teachers and all the mentors have stated the program is providing both groups with the skills they need to be successful in their respective roles. These participants stated in many occasions the program had no weakness and its strengths were reflected in the stated purposes of the program. “For what the program is I would say there aren’t many weaknesses,” explained Evelyn.

The success of this program makes it an excellent example of a mentoring program that could be used as a basis for other programs to use as a basis. I believe a perfect illustration of the success of the program is the statement Charles made when he wrote he and his mentor had a “great working relationship” and as Addison stated, “my mentor is perfect.” According to the
perceptions of the participants of the St. John’s County District Mentoring Program, the program is a success.
REFERENCES


*Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology: University of Manitoba*, 1-28.


*Administrative Issues: Education, Practice, and Research, 4*(1).


(Originally published in 1900)


APPENDIX A: Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Beginning Teachers

Section I- Open-ended interview questions.

1. Introduce yourself and include such information as age, degree obtained, year of graduation, and number of years you plan to teach.

2. Briefly describe your participation in the mentoring program.

3. Identify specific mentoring strategies used in the teacher mentoring program you feel has helped you grow as a teacher.

4. What are the challenges that you face as a beginning teacher?

5. Do you feel this mentorship program is adequately addressing those challenges?

6. What was the biggest obstacle that you have faced in your beginning years as a teacher?

7. What experiences from the mentorship program have helped you the most in dealing with this obstacle?

8. What do you perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher-mentoring program?

9. What changes would you like to see in the teacher mentoring program of this district?

10. What specifically did you learn from your mentor that will helped your teaching practice?

11. Describe what you wanted to learn from your mentor that you felt was not offered by your mentor.

12. What do you perceive would be different if you did not have a mentor?
Interview Questions for Mentors

Section I-Open ended interview questions

1. Introduce yourself and include such information as age, degree obtained, year of graduation, number of years you have taught, and any other information that may be relevant to your position as a mentor.

2. Briefly describe your participation in the mentoring program.

3. Identify specific mentoring strategies used in the teacher mentoring program you feel have helped the beginning teacher grow as a teacher.

4. Identify specific mentoring strategies used in the teacher mentoring program that you feel did not add to the beginning teacher’s growth.

5. Did you feel adequately prepared to participate as a mentor in this program?

6. Did you feel that the mentorship program adequately prepared the beginning teacher for the challenges of the classroom?

7. What challenges have you faced as a mentor that you felt you were not adequately prepared for by the program?

8. What do you perceive to be the strengths of the teacher mentoring program?

9. What do you perceive to be the weaknesses of the district teacher mentoring program?

10. What changes would you like to see in the teacher-mentoring program of this district?
APPENDIX B: Prompts for Journal Entries for Beginning Teachers

1. Reflect on how your interaction with your mentor helped you or hindered you.

2. Reflect on how your mentor could have acted differently in your interaction with him/her.

3. Reflect on what your mentor could do differently to help you in the classroom.

4. Do you feel your mentor is providing you with adequate support? What could he/she do differently?
APPENDIX C: Email to Participants

Good day,

My name is Donna Floyd and I am currently employed by [Beaufort County School District] as a middle school math teacher. I am also a doctorate student at Liberty University and am currently in the process writing my dissertation. My research is based upon the beginning teacher mentorship program in [Beaufort County].

The purpose of my research is to investigate the teacher mentorship program from the perspective of the beginning teacher. I hope to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the program to make suggestions to the district to strengthen the program. I have been involved in the mentorship program as both a mentor and mentee and have seen it from both perspectives. I would like to gather additional information from teachers who are close to the program, you the mentees.

To gather may information I will be asking that all participants answer a minimal amount of interview questions, make entries in a journal relating to the mentorship program for a small amount of time and, for just a few of you, observe your interactions with your mentors. There will be no compensation for your participation, but the information that you will be providing will be invaluable. All the information gathered in this research will be held in the strictest confidence. The information will be stored in locked files and password protected computers and all names will be held in the strictest confidence.

I would appreciate you participating in this research and I assure you it will not take up much of your valuable time. However, by investing your valuable time in this research, we will together make suggestions to strengthen the mentorship program so that it will produce prepared,
quality teachers. If you are willing to participate in this research, please respond to this email as soon as possible.

Thank you for your response and I am looking forward to hearing your perspective of the current mentorship program.

Thank you,
APPENDIX D: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

A CASE STUDY OF THE STAKEHOLDERS’ PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A SOUTH CAROLINA DISTRICT MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Donna Floyd
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study about the district mentorship program and the perceptions of the participants in this program. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a part of the mentorship program. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Donna Floyd, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University is conducting this study. Background Information: The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of beginning teachers and mentors concerning the district mentorship program. The study will explore the perceptions of individuals with similar backgrounds to compare them.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, you will be interviewed once by responding to open-ended questions about your perceptions of the effectiveness concerning the district mentorship program. The interview should take approximately one hour or less. They will be held as soon as you agree to participate in the program. In addition, you will be asked to make journal entries every two weeks concerning your participation in the mentorship program, and you will be asked to be observed during your interaction with your mentor and/or mentee. The observations will be conducted at the earliest convenience of all participants.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The study involves minimal risks, none of which involve anything beyond what you would experience in everyday life. First, although your name and identity will be completely hidden, there is the possibility that despite all precautions
taken and pseudonyms used, someone reading the final product may recognize the details of your story. Second, you may feel the exploration of the phenomenon exposes feelings. Participants will not receive a direct benefit. Your story may help educational leaders understand the phenomenon better and may help them take appropriate action for other middle school students.

Compensation: You will not receive payment for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. In the final presentation of this study, no information included will make it evident that you were one of the participants. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. The code sheet linking your personal identity with your data will be securely kept in a locked file separated from all other data. Research records in print format will be stored securely in locked file cabinets or in data files with password protection. Audio recordings of interviews will be transcribed word for word, securely kept in a locked file, and be destroyed three years after the end of the study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Beaufort County School District. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: Participants may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. If participants chose to withdraw, they simply need to email the researcher at donnafloyd@beaufort.k12.sc.us or at dfloyde@liberty.edu. If a participant withdraws from the study, the audio recordings of their interview will be deleted. In addition, your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.
Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Donna Floyd. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at 843-384-3446 or donna.floyd@beaufort.k12.sc.us. 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 my advisor, Dr. Dawn Lucas at dawn.lucas@pfeiffer.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, Green Hall Suite 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu. Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

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

Signature of participant: ________________________________ Date: ______________

Signature of Investigator: ________________________________ Date: ______________
January 18, 2017

As a graduate student in the Education Department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for my doctorate degree. The title of my research project is a Case Study of The Stakeholders’ Perception of The Effectiveness Of A South Carolina District Mentorship Program and the purpose of my research is to investigate the perceptions of beginning teachers concerning the current district mentorship program to make it a stronger program.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in the [Beaufort County School District]. I am employed by the district as a middle school math teacher at [Bluffton Middle School]. Participants will be interviewed by myself, make journal entries concerning the program, and in a few cases, be observed by me during their interaction with their mentors. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time. All the information obtained from the participants will be kept strictly confidential. At the end of the required time, the data will be destroyed.

For education research, district permission will need to be on approved letterhead with the appropriate signature. Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on approved letterhead indicating your approval by emailing it to dfloyde@liberty.edu or dfloyd78@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Donna Floyd
Doctoral Student
Doctorate Study, Liberty University
APPENDIX F: Permission Granted to Conduct Research in School District

My signature below certifies that:

- I have received a copy of the Guidelines and Procedures for Conducting Research Affiliated with County Schools and that I will comply fully with the policies and procedures outlined as part of my research.
- I have reviewed all relevant policies and procedures as outlined in that document related to responsible conduct in research including those related to ethical conduct and confidentiality.
- I understand that while working as a researcher under the supervision of a specified employee, I may have access to records and files that contain confidential information and that it is the employer's obligation to protect the rights of these files and/or individuals and that.
- I will follow the operating practices and procedures required while handling these records and will not inappropriately access or disclose this information.
- I acknowledge that if I misrepresent or omit any information as requested on this application I have jeopardized my continued association with the school district, and is cause for forfeiture of consideration.

[Signature]

Date: Feb. 6, 2017

Reviewed by:

[Signature]

Date: 

Disposition: APPROVED

[Signature]

Date: 

Disposition: DENIED

[Signature]

Date: 

Disposition: 

[Signature]

Date: 

Disposition: 

[Signature]

Date: 

Disposition: 

[Signature]

Date: 

Disposition: 
October 10, 2017

Donna P. Floyd
IRB Approval 2096 101017: A Case Study of the Stakeholders’ Perception of the Effectiveness of a South Carolina District Mentorship Program

Dear Donna P. Floyd,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University 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,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
APPENDIX H: Script for Meeting with Mentors and Mentees

Script for meeting with Mentors and Mentees at school district meeting. 
(Several meetings are held during the school year. The researcher will attend the first meeting after IRB approval)

TO: Participants in County Mentorship Program

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The purpose of my research is to study the perceptions of the stakeholders of the effectiveness of this school district and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are willing to participate, you will be asked to answer a few interview questions, journal your meetings with your mentor/mentee every two weeks, and allow me to observe you during one of your mentor/mentees meetings. It should take approximately 30-60 minutes for you to answer the interview questions, journaling should only take 30 minutes every two weeks, and the observation will be the length of your normal meeting with you mentor. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected. If you choose to participate, you will be given a consent form today. The consent form contains additional information concerning my research and should be filled out and returned to me as soon as possible. It is my hope that you will be able to return the consent forms to me within 7-10 days. Follow-up emails will also be sent out and it will also include a copy of the consent form. If desired, the signed consent forms can be emailed to me at

Once the consent forms have been received, times for both the interviews and the meeting observations will be set up.
APPENDIX I: Mentor Checklist

☐ Share ideas from professional development to implement in the classroom
☐ Collaborate to plan lessons based on need noted in data
☐ Discuss school traditions and district policies regarding holiday events and activities (e.g., sensitivity to religious issues)
☐ Discuss upcoming social gathering and staff activities
☐ Detail a plan for dealing with the week before and after the holiday break
☐ Review the fall semester’s experiences: highlights, struggles, goals
☐ Discuss upcoming exam schedules and policies (where applicable)
☐ Plan for possible changes after the holidays
☐ Review the district assessment calendar
☐ Monitor progress of the SLO
☐ Other:

Meeting Notes (reflecting upon your discussions)

Signatures of Completion
Mentor_________________________________________ Date
Mentee_________________________________________ Date
“The most powerful form of learning, the most sophisticated form of staff development, comes not from listening to the good works of others but from sharing what we know with others... By reflecting on what we do, by giving it coherence, and by sharing and articulating our craft knowledge, we make meaning, we learn.”

Roland Barth
Many of the material found within this booklet is based upon the work of CERRA and the New Teacher Center of Santa Cruz.
Welcome Mentors!

I am always proud of the work of mentors within [redacted]. Your dedication to assisting teachers as they develop professionally is invaluable.

Mentors and apprentices are partners in an ancient human dance, and one of teaching’s great rewards is the daily chance it gives us to get back on the dance floor. It is the dance of the spiraling generations, in which the old empower the young with their experience and the young empower the old with new life, reweaving the fabric of the human community as they touch and turn. (Parker J. Palmer, The Courage To Teach)

Within the pages of the Mentoring Program Guide, you will find important information regarding your role as a Mentor. Please read over the information carefully. This guide provides information for both the Induction Mentor and Formal Evaluation Mentor.

Throughout the year District Mentors are available to support your work with your advisee as they fulfill the necessary requirements to complete Induction or Formal Evaluation. There is an opportunity to celebrate with your advisee at the end of the year. We hope that you will set time aside to enjoy celebrating professional milestones with your advisee.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns regarding this information. Again, thank you for all you do to help us to support, mentor and retain quality teachers in Beaufort County!

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Chief Human Resources Officer
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## Mentor Performance Standards

### Mentor Performance Standards
- ADVOCATE
- ASSESSOR
- COACH
- COLLABORATOR
- FACILITATOR
- LEARNER
- PROBLEM-SOLVER
- RESOURCE
- TEACHER
- TRUSTED LISTENER

## Appendix

- District Mentoring Team Contacts

## Beaufort County School District

## Variable Induction and Mentoring Program

- Overview of the Induction and Mentoring Initiative
- Formative Evaluation Requirements
- Levels of Induction Teacher Development
- Formative Evaluation Evidence
- Assistance Team
- Building Mentors

## Formative Evaluation for Induction-Contract Educators

## Collaborative Assessment Log

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Left Blank in Program Guide
Variable Induction and Mentoring Program

- Purpose of Mentoring
- Mentoring Guiding Principles
- Mentor Roles and Responsibilities
- Requirements

“Thank you for making me a passionate teacher who hopes to make the community strong, smart, and hopeful through the eyes of the Beaufort County children.”

Induction Teacher Survey Response
Purpose of Mentoring

State/national statistics indicate that a growing number of new teachers will be entering our classrooms over the course of the next 5-7 years. The numbers are staggering. But the numbers also represent a very exciting opportunity to influence the entire next generation of teachers—the next 30+ years of teaching and learning in our schools.

Mentoring beginning teachers is about accelerating new teacher development. The intent is to instill in our novice colleagues such professional habits of mind that lead to a sense of professional effectiveness (efficacy), not discouragement. It is about using the language of professional empowerment; asking hard questions about what's going on in the classroom and then seeking answers together; modeling and coaching the pedagogical practices that lead to student success; focusing our conversations on learning and student achievement; and demanding high standards of ourselves, our colleagues, and our students. As mentors and coaches, it is also about demanding environments and policies that enable us to do this work WELL and sustain our veteran teachers and our new teachers over time.

Unless we slow the rates of attrition and "churn" caused by teacher turnover, we will not be able to provide the high-quality education for all of society's children, regardless of ethnicity, language, or socio-economic status. We would go a step further, though, and say that this sort of work is nothing less than the total reshaping of America's schools. We are about changing the way in which new (and veteran) teachers see their professional roles and shape their professional lives. It's about creating a new kind of teacher and new kinds of schools.

Our hope lies in the fact that we, as a profession, actually KNOW how to lower the shocking drop-out rates among new teachers and increase the quality of teaching in the classroom—numerous studies attest that well-designed and carefully managed systems of support and assessment can do both. This is why we mentor.

Beginning Teacher Attrition is a Serious Problem

[Bar chart showing teacher attrition rates by year: 1st Year: 14%, 2nd Year: 24%, 3rd Year: 33%, 4th Year: 40%, 5th Year: 46%]

Mentor Roles and Responsibilities

A mentor’s role is multifaceted. Within any visit with a beginning teacher, the mentor may change “hats” many times. Mentors flow between these roles to support the professional growth of beginning teachers. The overarching role of the mentor is that of change agent. Just as a classroom teacher accepts the charge of his/hers students’ learning, so, too, does the mentor take on the responsibility of moving a beginning teacher’s practice forward. Mentors are not just guides along the side - they are sometimes teachers, sometimes problem-solvers, sometimes co-constructors of knowledge, and ALWAYS good listeners.

Mentoring an Induction Teacher

As an Induction Mentor, you will be able to serve your advisee in a variety of ways as he/she develops professionally.

All induction-contract teachers must be assigned a mentor. The role of the mentor during the assisting phase of the ADEPT process is to help a beginning teacher examine his or her professional practice. Formative assessment data are used to identify the teacher’s strengths and challenges so that the appropriate assistance and guidance can be provided to him or her.

Mentoring a Formally Evaluated Teacher

During the ADEPT formal evaluation year, teachers must be assigned a mentor. The role of this mentor varies from the role of the mentor during the teacher’s induction year. During the formal evaluation year, it is important that the teacher demonstrates autonomy and mastery of his/her content and the craft of teaching.

This step of autonomy is necessary to ensure that the teacher is evaluated based solely on his/her merits and that the strengths or weaknesses of the mentor do not interfere with the evaluation process. Therefore, while the mentor is a support to the teacher, the mentor cannot intervene between the teacher and the formal evaluation process.

Providing the annual contract teacher with the above mentioned support aligns with the following South Carolina Mentoring guidelines:

2.D.1 The district must provide mentoring for annual-contract teachers who either are scheduled to receive diagnostic assistance or are scheduled for the ADEPT formal evaluation. The major purpose of mentoring teachers at the annual-contract level is to give them sustained support and assistance in order to improve their teaching performance and to ensure their ongoing professional development.

2.D.3 The school administration must ensure that regular opportunities are provided for each annual-contract teacher to meet with his or her mentor in sessions devoted to such matters as

- a. the practice of continually reflecting on one’s teaching;
- b. specific areas where improvement is needed;
- c. school-related procedures, assignments, and issues;
- d. collaborative projects; and
- e. plans for other professional development activities.

A Mentor for Annual Contract Teachers is...

- A resource to provide examples of Best Practices, school-related procedures, and assignments;
- A trusted listener;
- An advocate for the needs of the teacher and for the needs of the teacher’s students;
- A facilitator during reflective conversations with the teacher;
- A learner.

A Mentor for Annual Contract Teachers is NOT...

- An assessor;
- A problem-solver. It is necessary for the annual contract teacher to make his/her own decisions;
- A coach who provides absolute plans of action;
- A collaborator because the annual contract teacher is being formally evaluated, not the mentor;
- A teacher to the teacher.
Requirements

Mentor Survey – Throughout the school year, you will receive periodic emails with a link to Survey Monkey. The mentor survey serves as an accountability tool to reflect on your mentoring practice and outcomes with your assigned beginning teachers. The goal is to increase self-reflection as well as target the needs of our beginning teachers. Mentor surveys are used to help the Induction Advisory Team identify common themes that arise that could be addressed through professional development or other resources. The mentor must complete and submit each survey in order to receive compensation.

Mentoring Meeting – It is important to maintain regularly scheduled meetings to provide the beginning teacher with support and feedback. This is where you become an active listener, discuss your advisee’s strengths and how to enhance their professional growth as well as discuss the areas of refinement with a plan to work on these growth areas. This meeting serves many purposes.

Mentor Contract – Once building administrators have completed the pairings, the District Lead Mentoring Team will ask you to complete a Contract for Professional Services. A successful mentor relationship requires a commitment on the part of both partners. At any time either the mentor or beginning teacher may withdraw from the relationship by contacting your assigned District Lead Mentor.

Mentor Assurance Form – This form indicates services. At the end of the school year, the District Lead Mentoring Team will forward the Mentor Assurance form to the ADEPT Coordinators to distribute to all assigned mentors in their buildings. The assurance form is to be completed in its entirety and accurately in order to receive payment or credit in a timely manner. Therefore, the following are required: signatures (mentor, beginning teacher, ADEPT coordinator), number of semesters served, and designation for either a stipend or 20 recertification points. You may only receive one allotment of 20 recertification points once every five years.

The Mentor agrees to render acceptable service, perform the responsibilities of a mentor for the assigned advisee(s) and comply with the State Guidelines.

Induction I and II Mentor Requirements

• Implement and fulfill all requirements of the Induction Assistance Team when assigned
• Provide support as indicated by building administrator
• Assist the teacher in developing and reviewing any required plans, reflections, and other types of evidence documentation
• Assist the teacher in locating and accessing professional development resources and activities
• Assess the advisee’s teaching on the basis of the Continuum of Teacher Development
• Fulfill survey requirements
• Attend Mentor Orientation

Formal Evaluation Mentor Requirements

• Engage in reflective mentoring conversations with the teacher
• Review school-related procedures, assignments, and issues
• Provide intensive and individualized support to improve the teacher’s performance and to ensure ongoing professional development
• Fulfill survey requirements
• Attend Mentor Orientation and End-of-Preliminary-Phase Meeting

Mentor Tools

It is critical for mentors to have a variety of tools or strategies available when working with teachers. There is no one way of being a mentor - we need to be adaptive and responsive, both in the roles we play and in the strategies and tools we use. The trick is, of course, developing a sense of what is appropriate for a given advisee at a given place in time.

Collaborative Assessment Log - a bridge from conducting the mentoring conversation to recording the content and outcomes of that conversation. It can be used at the end of the conversation as a summary tool, or it can be used ongoing throughout the conversation as a recording and focusing tool.

Interactive Journal - a support strategy that serves as a tool for building relationships and maintaining communication between the beginning teacher and the mentor. It offers a way to promote and encourage the beginning teacher to reflect.

Continuum - a self-assessment tool based upon a beginning teacher’s educational practices. It is used to set clear, professional goals, and guide the mentor’s support and assistance.

Mentoring Conversation - verbal interaction between a mentor and an advisee. It can help to create professional norms in the ongoing conversations that move the teacher’s practice forward.
Left Blank in Program Guide
Mentor Performance Standards

“My building mentor was a very trusted listener, and had empathetic and positive responses to all of my questions and concerns. She was able to positively help me improve whenever I was struggling by observing me, setting up times where I could observe her and other teachers within my building, helping me think through conflicts, providing resources or helping me locate resources whenever I needed anything. She consistently provided feedback on my growth having to do with my instruction and my classroom management. She was fantastic!”

Induction Teacher’s Reflection
Mentor Performance Standards

**Advocate** - An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by acting as a liaison on behalf of the new teacher. The mentor builds and maintains a trusting relationship and supports the new teacher when he/she needs assistance. **Year 1 and 2**

**Assessor** - An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by continually and consistently assessing teacher performance by observing and providing feedback using various strategies and tools. **Year 1**

**Counsel** - An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by modeling effective teaching strategies, building upon advisee teaching experiences and prior knowledge, actively listening to the new teacher’s concerns and comments, and encouraging the new teacher's development and growth towards holonomy. **Year 1**

**Collaborator** - An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by working side-by-side with the new teacher to brainstorm effective teaching strategies, develop standards-based units, write detailed lesson plans and analyze student performance. **Year 1**

**Facilitator** - An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by creating opportunities for the new teacher to meet, observe, plan with other master teachers in order to expand his or her teaching practice and philosophy. The facilitator is there to enhance the new teacher’s pedagogy as he or she begins to develop his or her individual teaching practice. **Year 1 and 2**

**Learner** - An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by demonstrating that an effective teacher is a life-long professional learner. **Year 1 and 2**

**Problem-solver** - An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by establishing appropriate problem-solving strategies designed to address the needs of the new teacher. **Year 1**

**Resource** - An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by continually providing materials, guidance, references, ideas, and contact information. **Year 1 and 2**

**Teacher** - An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by demonstrating and modeling best practices of a master teacher. **Year 1**

**Trusted Listener** - An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by being an attentive listener, and responsive confidante. **Year 1 and 2**

**ADVOCATE**
An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by acting as a liaison on behalf of the new teacher. The mentor builds and maintains a trusting relationship and supports the new teacher when he/she needs assistance.

**Essential elements:**
1. Serving as a liaison when appropriate
   - A. Between the new teacher and administrators
   - B. Between the new teacher and other staff members
   - C. Between the new teacher and parents
2. Attending meetings with the new teacher when appropriate with:
   - A. Administrators
   - B. Other teachers and staff members
   - C. Parents

**ASSESSOR**
An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by continually and consistently assessing teacher performance by observing and providing feedback using various strategies and tools.

**Essential elements:**
1. Gathering data on the advisee
   - A. Conducting informal observations
   - B. Analyzing lesson plans
   - C. Viewing and analyzing video-taped lessons
   - D. Monitoring compliance with ADEPT requirements
   - E. Collecting informal data via interactive journals, Collaborative Assessment Log, Continuum conversations, etc.
   - F. Guiding reflective discussions which allow for metacognition
   - G. Keeping a "mental checklist" based on a master teacher’s experience
2. Providing consistent and effective feedback based upon evidence
   - A. Evaluating strengths and weaknesses on APS’s
   - B. Using the CAL
   - C. Promoting and incorporating the interactive journal
   - D. Keeping mentor logs
   - E. Incorporating the Continuum with advisee
   - F. Keeping written observational documentation or scripted observation
   - G. Listening actively to the advisee during conversations and giving constructive feedback
COACH
An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by modeling effective teaching strategies, building upon advisee’s teaching experiences and prior knowledge, actively listening to the new teacher’s concerns and comments, and encouraging the new teacher’s development and growth towards holonomy.

Essential elements:
1. Providing positive and constructive reinforcements
   A. Conducting classroom observations and sharing evidence in the ADEPT Professional Standards
   B. Having mentoring conversations regarding the performance standards
   C. Writing in the interactive journal to assist the teacher in reflecting upon growth and posing questions to further teaching practice
2. Modeling expectations
   A. Teaching a model lesson
   B. Teaching side by side
   C. Providing immediate feedback either through writing or through mentoring conversations

COLLABORATOR
An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by working side-by-side with the new teacher to brainstorm effective teaching strategies, develop standards-based units, write detailed lesson plans and analyze student performance.

Essential elements:
1. Assisting the new teacher with:
   A. Long-range plans
   B. Short-range plans
   C. Special events, such as guest speakers
   D. Classroom Management
2. Assisting new teacher in analyzing data and identifying teaching behaviors that have the greatest impact on student performance
   A. Data (MAP, PACT, Test View, Compass, Skills Tutor, IRIS, etc.)
   B. Classroom observations
   C. Classroom management

FACILITATOR
An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by creating opportunities for the new teacher to meet, observe, and plan with other master teachers in order to expand his or her teaching practice and philosophy. The facilitator is there to enhance the new teacher’s pedagogy as he or she begins to develop his or her individual teaching practice.

Essential elements:
1. Providing opportunities for the new teacher to observe best practices in action
   A. Observe master teacher: both alone and with mentor
   B. Discuss/observe observation of master teacher
   C. View and discuss examples of standards-based lesson plans
2. Providing opportunities for the new teacher to reflect on their own practice
   A. Videotaping lesson/process together
   B. Observing and conducting post-observation conversations
3. Helping to achieve specific outcomes related to professional development and teacher need
   A. Stimulating dialogue and interaction
   B. Familiarizing advisee with culture and content in which teachers are working
   C. Encouraging open communication
4. Providing time for self-reflection to enhance teachers’ ability to seek solutions through questioning, listening and giving feedback
   A. Encourage self-appraisal and self-reflection
   B. Use questioning to help new teacher reflect on teaching practices

LEARNER
An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by demonstrating that an effective teacher is a life-long professional learner.

Essential elements:
1. Providing professional growth opportunities
   A. Identifying and/or providing professional journals to further the new teacher’s craft
   B. Identifying possible staff development opportunities, as well as off-site professional development
2. Providing feedback on the teacher’s mastery of the performance standards
   A. In a timely manner – 48 hour response
   B. Giving opportunities for reflection on effectiveness of the performance standards
   C. Identifying needs that will guide future learning

PROBLEM-SOLVER
An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by establishing appropriate problem-solving strategies designed to address the needs of the new teacher.

Essential elements:
1. Networking
   A. Identifying “go to” people for a variety of specific situations
   B. Providing resources (books, articles, handbooks, websites) to address specific situations
2. Role-playing
   A. Addressing specific situations (for example: speaking with parents or administrators) by practicing with new teacher
   B. Supporting new teacher in all areas, including classroom management, trouble-shooting specific problems with students, etc.
3. Guide the new teacher through problem-solving strategies
   A. Identify or define problem
   B. Brainstorm possible solutions
   C. Plan steps to resolve the problem
   D. Put the plan into action
   E. Reflect on the outcome of the plan

RESOURCE
An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by continually providing materials, guidance, references, ideas, and contact information.

Essential elements:
1. Providing ongoing resource support.
   A. Defining and providing examples related to classroom responsibilities (i.e., LRP)
   B. Sharing content appropriate resources (i.e., web-links, professional magazine, consultants, professional development opportunities, networking with other colleagues who share the same content areas)
   C. Identifying and introducing key staff within the new teacher’s building as potential resources (guidance counselors, bookkeeper, social worker, attendance clerk, etc.)
   D. Identifying key people within the district and community who could provide guidance or support
   E. Providing Effective Teaching Strategies (ETS)
2. Share information about Special Services
   A. RTI Teams
   B. Speech
   C. ESOL
   D. Social Worker
   E. Guidance Referrals
   F. Curriculum Coaches
   G. Resource

3. Create awareness of other resources available in school.
   A. Teacher Handbook
   B. Office personnel
   C. Technology resources

TEACHER
An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by demonstrating and modeling best practices of a master teacher. Essential elements:
1. Guiding the new teacher’s development and implementation of units of study and lesson plans that relate to South Carolina Standards, content goals, and the needs and interests of diverse learners.
   A. Providing or locating current SC Standards for appropriate content areas.
   B. Familiarizing new teacher with research-based strategies that work.
   C. Providing new teacher with information about differentiated instruction and how to address the various multiple intelligences.
   D. Modeling master teaching.
2. Providing new teachers with various assessment tools.
   A. Guiding the new teacher in identifying and using a variety of formative and summative assessment strategies to measure student learning.
   B. Sharing questioning techniques and strategies that address a variety of cognitive levels.
   C. Using appropriate data collection strategies and instruments for the purpose of identifying areas of strengths and areas needing improvement.

3. Demonstrating effective classroom management.
   A. Offering suggestions to develop an effective management plan.
   B. Modeling how to manage individual student behavior.
   C. Sharing tips for establishing positive and productive communication with parents.

TRUSTED LISTENER
An effective mentor facilitates new teacher growth by being an attentive listener and responsive confidante. Essential elements:
1. Conducting meetings with new teacher to promote open communication.
2. Using the interactive tools to communicate with the new teacher.
   A. Interactive Journal
      i. Share private concerns/thoughts
      ii. Discuss confidential situations
      iii. Respond in a timely manner
   B. E-mail (for clarification, general inquiries...e-mail is not meant for confidential or personal matters)
Appendix

- District Mentoring Team Contacts
- Variable Induction and Mentoring Program
- Collaborative Assessment Log
- Mentoring Conversation Stems
- Phases of a First Year Teacher

“My building mentor provided me with one-on-one assistance when creating lesson plans on the new lesson plan format for my school. She met with me on weekends to guide me. If I asked for activities or assessments for my students, she provided samples that were successful in her class. When I wasn’t sure how to teach a certain strategy, she would come into my classroom and model a lesson for me to observe. I mostly appreciate that when I was having a rough day and needed a shoulder, she was there to support me.”

Induction Survey Response
Induction and Mentoring Program supports Induction and Formal Evaluation teachers according to South Carolina’s mandated Induction and Mentoring Guidelines.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.
Variable Induction and Mentoring Program

Overview of the Induction and Mentoring Initiative
A component of South Carolina's ADEPT system, beginning teacher induction is a Formative Evaluation Process designed to promote the professional performance and effectiveness of novice educators through structured assistance and ongoing, formative feedback. ADEPT Formative Evaluation applies to and is required for all groups of beginning teachers, including classroom-based teachers, school counselors, library media specialists, school psychologists and speech-language therapists.

Based upon the passage of Act 231 during the 2012 legislative session, amended Section 59-26-40 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina, Beaufort County School District will provide for an induction period of up to two years for beginning teachers, prior to advancement to an annual contract. The length of the induction-contract period for each teacher – one or two years – is left to the discretion of the employing school district and should be based upon a beginning teacher’s successful completion of induction requirements and his or her readiness to participate in the summative evaluation process.

Formative Evaluation Requirements
The ADEPT Formative Evaluation process must address all ADEPT Performance Standards and types of evidence documentation that apply to each group of teachers (classroom-based teachers, school guidance counselors, library media specialists, and speech-language therapists).

The most important distinctions between formative and summative processes are that, during Formative Evaluation,

- The observers are to provide immediate feedback to the teacher on all types of performance evidence, including observations and documents;
- The observers are to confer with the teacher and coach the teacher through processes such as reflections, planning and the like;
- The observers are to provide assistance to the teacher, as needed;
- The observers are to ensure that the teacher has the necessary resources and the opportunities to engage in professional collaborations;
- At the end of each evaluation period (preliminary and final), the Assistance Team members are to complete the Performance Data Guide – Induction Teachers Only Summary; and
- School Administrators will create a Professional Growth and Development Plan for Induction Teachers.

During the ADEPT Formative Evaluation process, particular emphasis is placed on the growth of the beginning teacher.

Formative Evaluation Evidence

Professional Growth and Development Plan
- School Building Administrators will develop individualized PGDP based upon the beginning teacher’s evaluation summary
- The creation and implementation of plans are based upon needs assessment (Continuum, ADEPT Performance Standards)

Performance Data Guide
- Completed by Assistance Team
- Assistance Team writes up Performance Data based upon evidence from the ADEPT Performance Standards

Levels of Induction Teacher Development

Beginning: the teacher relies on ongoing assistance from more experienced colleagues for support, guidance, and survival, and tries to internalize and apply what she or he has learned about teaching

Emerging: the teacher still relies on more experienced colleagues for support but moves toward becoming more self-directed and independent in her or his practice

Applying: the teacher is able to teach independently, internalizes, and easily applies what she or he has learned about teaching
Assistance Team
At least two observers must be assigned to each educator on the Formative Evaluation level. Induction Assistance Teams are made up of a school administrator and a district mentor. Their work will be supported by a building mentor and coaches.

Building Mentors
Because beginning teacher assistance and support is of primary importance throughout ADEPT Formative Evaluation, mentors play an essential role.

Requirements for Assigning Mentors
The following mentor assignment requirements apply to ADEPT Formative Evaluation:
- A mentor must be assigned to each first-year induction-contract teacher.
- A mentor may be assigned to any second or third-year induction teachers at the discretion of the school district.
- A mentor must be assigned to any annual-contract teacher participating in ADEPT Formative Evaluation.

Mentor Qualifications
In order to be eligible to serve as an assigned mentor, the educator must:
- Hold a valid South Carolina professional teaching certificate
- Have completed a minimum of one-year of successful teaching experience in South Carolina at the continuing-contract level
- Express a desire or a willingness to serve as a mentor
- Be recommended by a school or district administrator and by another teacher to serve as a mentor
- Have successfully completed all required South Carolina Department of Education – approved mentor training activities.

Considerations for Matching Mentors to Teachers
In assigning a mentor to a teacher, school administrators must:
- Match the mentor to the teacher according to at least two of the following three factors:
  - Areas of certification
  - Grade levels
  - Physical proximity
- Ensure that the mentor is assigned to and begins working with the teacher in a timely manner – no later than two weeks following the teacher’s start date or the date that a decision is made to assign a mentor.

Building Mentor Responsibilities
- Assist the teacher in implementing the Professional Growth and Development Plan
- Assist the teacher in developing and reviewing any required plans, reflections, and other types of evidence documentation
- Assist the teacher in locating and accessing professional development resources and activities
- Conference with the teacher on a regular basis
- Complete mentor surveys as evidence that the required mentoring activities have been accomplished

Characteristics demonstrated by effective mentors include:
- A knowledge of beginning-teacher professional development and effective adult learning strategies
- A thorough command of the subject matter
- A solid working knowledge of student academic standards and assessments
- A sound working knowledge of effective instructional strategies
- A knowledge of current educational trends, technologies, and literacy requirements
- A solid working knowledge of current educational performance standards, evaluation processes and evaluation requirements
- Effective communication and interpersonal skills
- The ability to serve as a role model
- The desire and ability to work collaboratively for a common cause and/or for a greater good
- The desire and the ability to continue to grow professionally
## Formative Evaluation for Induction-Contract Educators

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<tr>
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<th>Induction I</th>
<th>Induction II</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Induction Program</strong></td>
<td>Participation required • Seminar attendance • Electronic assignments</td>
<td>Targeted participation, as needed</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assigned Mentor</strong></td>
<td>Required • Building Mentor • District Mentor</td>
<td>Required • Building Mentor • District Mentor</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>An assigned mentor is specifically matched to the teacher in order to provide more intensive and individualized support, beyond the level of support provided to other teachers.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistance Team</strong></td>
<td>Required • School Administrator • District Mentor</td>
<td>Required • School Administrator • District Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>An Assistance Team must observe and assist the beginning educator.</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Required Processes and Induction Components</strong></td>
<td>Formative evaluation processes must address all ADEPT Performance Standards Continuum of Teacher Development Performance Data Guide Induction Formative Evaluation Summary</td>
<td>Formative evaluation processes must address all ADEPT Performance Standards, with targeted focus on the beginning educator’s identified area(s) for improvement Continuum of Teacher Development Performance Data Guide Induction Formative Evaluation Summary</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>During the induction period, particular emphasis is placed on the growth of the teacher.</em></td>
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<td>Immediate feedback must be provided to the teacher</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A Professional Growth and Development Plan must be developed with the educator based on data gathered through the formative evaluation process.</td>
<td>The Professional Growth and Development Plan must be reviewed and updated with the educator based on data gathered through the formative evaluation process.</td>
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### Annual Formal I & II vs. Continuing Formal

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<td>Required building mentor • <em>District mentor may be assigned in specific cases</em></td>
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<td><strong>Mentor Roles for Formal Evaluation Teachers</strong></td>
<td>• Engage in reflective mentoring conversations with the teacher • Review school-related procedures, assignments, and issues • Provide intensive and individualized support to improve the teacher’s performance and to ensure ongoing professional development</td>
<td>• Engage in reflective mentoring conversations with the teacher • Review school-related procedures, assignments, and issues • Provide intensive and individualized support to improve the teacher’s performance and to ensure ongoing professional development</td>
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<td>Fulfills all requirements</td>
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<td>Calendar of ADEPT Procedures</td>
<td>Induction I</td>
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<td><strong>Teacher Templates</strong></td>
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<td>Enhanced ADEPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>- T1 - Evidence of Planning and Student Growth</td>
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<td>- T2 - Teacher Reflection for the Observed Lesson</td>
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<td>- T3 - Teacher Professional Self-Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Evaluator/Self-Evaluation Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>- TT4 Professional Self-Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Continuum of Teacher Development</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides Formative Evaluation at the conclusion of both the Preliminary and Final Formative Evaluation cycles</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developed by School Building Administrators</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads Preliminary and Final Formative Evaluation cycle meetings to review summary with Induction teachers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Growth and Development Plan</td>
<td>Fulfills all requirements</td>
<td>Fulfills all requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigned Mentor</td>
<td>Required Building Mentor and District Mentor</td>
<td>Required Building Mentor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*District Mentors may be assigned in specific cases.</td>
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*District Mentors may be assigned in specific cases.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEXT MEETING DATE:</strong></td>
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| Members' Next Steps: | Teachers Next Steps: |

| Current Focus - Challenges - Concerns: | + What's Working: |

| Assessment Log: | Collaborative |
Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing communicates that the listener has...
HEARD what the speaker said,
UNDERSTOOD what was said,
CARES

Paraphrasing involves either:
RESTATING in your own words, or SUMMARIZING

Some possible paraphrasing stems include the following:
So...
In other words, ...
What I am hearing then ...
What I hear you saying, ...
From what I hear you say ...
I’m hearing many things, ...
As I listen to you I’m hearing ...

Mediational Questions

Mediational questions help the colleague
HYPOTHESIZE what might happen,
ANALYZE what worked or didn’t
IMAGINE possibilities
COMPARE & CONTRAST what was planned with what ensued

Some mediational question stems include...
What’s another way you might ...
What would it look like if ...
What do you think would happen if ...
How was it different from (like) ...
What’s another way you might ...
What sort of an impact do you think ...
What criteria do you use to ...
When have you done something like before ...
What do you think ...
How did you decide (come to a conclusion) ...
What might you see happening in your classroom if ...

Teachable Moments

Teachable moments are spontaneous opportunities that offer the mentor a chance to:
• Fill in instructional gaps
• Help the teacher make good choices
• Help the teacher to take “the next step”

• When taking advantage of a teachable moment, it’s important to:
  • Share in the spirit of support
  • Be brief – focus on the essential
  • Be strategic
  • Avoid using jargon or sounding pedantic

• Some possible stems include the following:
  • One thing to keep in mind is ...
  • If you’re interested in ..., it’s important to ...
  • What I know about ___ is ...
  • It’s sometimes/usually helpful to ___ when ...

Clarifying

Clarifying communicates that the listener has...
HEARD what the speaker said,
BUT does
NOT fully UNDERSTOOD what was said.

Clarifying involves ASKING A QUESTION (direct or implied) to
1. Gather more information
2. Discover the meaning of the language used
3. Get clarity about the speaker’s reasoning
4. Seek connections between ideas
5. Develop or maintain a focus

Some possible clarifying stems include the following:
Would you tell me a little more about ...
Let me see if I understand ...
I’d be interested in hearing more about ...
It’d help me understand if you’d give me an example of ...
So, are you saying/suggesting ...
Tell me what you mean when you ...
Tell me how that idea is like (different from) ...
To what extent ...
I’m curious to know more about ...
I’m intrigued by ...
I’m interested in ...

NOTE: “Why” tends to elicit a defensive response.

Non-Judgmental Responses

Non-judgmental responses help to:
• Build trust
• Promote an internal focus of control
• Encourage self-assessment
• Develop beginning teacher autonomy
• Foster risk-taking

Possible examples:
• Identify what worked and why
I noticed how when you ___ the students really ___
• Encourage
It sounds like you have a number of ideas to try out! It’ll be exciting/interesting/great to see which works best for you!
• Ask the teacher to self-assess
How do you think the lesson went and why?
• Ask the teacher to identify her or his role
What did you do to make the lesson so successful?
• Listen
• Ask sincere questions
Show enthusiasm for and interest in the teacher’s work and thinking
I’m interested in learning/hearing more about ...
I’m really looking forward to...
Attitudes for Effective Listening

- You must truly want to hear what the other person has to say.
- You must view the other person as separate from yourself with alternative ways of seeing the world.
- You must genuinely be able to accept the other person's feelings, no matter how different they are from your own.
- You must trust the other person's capacity to handle, work through, and find solutions to his/her own problems.

Suggestion Stems

One thing I've learned/noticed is...
A couple of things to keep in mind...
From our experience, one thing we've noticed...
Several/some teachers I know have tried a couple of different things in this sort of situation and maybe one might work for you...
What I know about ___ is...
Something/some things to keep in mind when dealing with...
Something you might consider trying is...
There are a number of approaches...
Sometimes it's helpful if...

Try following a suggestion with a question that invites the teacher to imagine/hypothesize how the idea might work in his/her context.

How might that look in your classroom?
To what extent might that work in your situation/with your students?
What do you imagine might happen if you were to try something like that with your class?
Which of these ideas might work best in your classroom (with your students)?

Suggestions

- Are expressed with invitational, positive language and voice tone
- Offer choices to encourage ownership
- Are often expressed as a question (or include a "tag question") to invite further thinking
- Are achievable – enough to encourage, but not to overwhelm
- May provide information about the mentor's thinking and decision-making

Phases of First-Year Teaching

First year teaching is a difficult challenge. Equally challenging is figuring out ways to support and assist beginning teachers as they enter the profession. While not every new teacher goes through this exact sequence, these phases are very useful in helping everyone involved in the process of supporting new teachers.

**Anticipation Phase**
- Beginning teachers feel excited and anxious.
- They tend to romanticize teaching.
- They are committed to making a difference.

**Survival Phase**
- Beginning teachers are caught off guard by the realities of teaching.
- Most new teachers struggle to keep their heads above water.
- They become very focused and consumed with the day-to-day routine of teaching.
- There is little time to reflect on their experience.
- They struggle with developing instructional plans.

**Disillusionment Phase**
- New teachers begin questioning both their commitment and their competence.
- Many get sick.
- They are faced with stressful events: parent teacher conferences, formal evaluations.
- Classroom management causes them a lot of distress.
- They express self-doubt, have lower self-esteem and question their professional commitment.

**Rejuvenation Phase**
- They begin to organize their materials.
- They have accepted the realities of teaching and have a sense of accomplishment.
- They focus on curriculum development, long-term planning and teaching strategies.

**Reflection Phase**
- While reflecting back over the year, they highlight events that were successful and those that were not.
- They think about the changes they are planning to make in terms of classroom management, curriculum and teaching strategies.

**Anticipation Phase**
- Teachers begin to think about what their second year of teaching will look like.
Ms. Floyd,

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Congratulations!

Donna Smith, Ed.D.
District Mentor, NBCT
Beaufort County School District