Perceptions: Are mandatory mentoring programs contributing to beginning teachers' retention in urban public school settings in Northern New Jersey?

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Perceptions: Are mandatory mentoring programs contributing to beginning teachers’ retention in urban public school settings in Northern New Jersey?

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Seton Hall University
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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Ronnie Estrict, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the
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and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this
form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and
submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.
ABSTRACT

The research performed for this study examined the perceptions of beginning teachers who participated in mandatory mentoring programs, to discover whether such programs contributed to teacher retention in urban public settings in Northern New Jersey. Characteristics found to have an influence on beginning teachers’ retention rate in the existing literature were evaluated and reported. The interview questions were developed based on the literature review and advice from a jury of expert administrators. The beginning teachers participated in semi-structured interviews lasting 45 minutes each to provide insight into their experiences, their participation in mentoring programs, and their view of the teaching profession as they continue to work in urban public settings with high teacher turnover. Fifteen sources of data, consisting of fifteen semi-structured interviews of beginning teachers participating in mentoring programs within an urban public school setting, were selected for this study. All data explored in this study pertained to these fifteen beginning teachers located in one urban public school district in Northern New Jersey during the 2017-2018 academic school year. The results of the study suggest that mandatory mentoring programs do contribute to beginning teachers’ retention in urban public school settings in Northern New Jersey.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beautiful, loving, and supportive wife Krista McKinney Estrict, my son Ronald Jonathan Estrict, and my daughter Ryleigh Jordan Estrict. I want to thank my parents — my father, the late John Estrict, Sr., and my mother, Johnnie Eva Estrict — for raising me to be an independent, self-sufficient man. This work is also dedicated to all of my family members, and to all of the sons and daughters of The African Diaspora who were never afforded the opportunity to obtain a formal education.
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CHAPTER I

ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter I outlines the purpose of this study, which is to understand how well mandatory mentoring programs are succeeding in increasing the retention of beginning teachers in urban public schools. Chapter II outlines the needs of beginning teachers, three important theoretical frameworks: organizational, self-determination, and behavioral; and the needs of mentoring programs. Chapter III explains the elements of qualitative research design that were employed in this study. This chapter includes a description of the population, sample, instruments, and methods used to conduct research. The processes of data collection and data analysis are also included. In addition, this chapter reviews the ethical considerations important in my research. Chapter IV shows the findings of the interview questions as they relate to the two research questions of mentor support and professional development that beginning teachers received, and the effectiveness of mentoring programs. Chapter V suggests the future follow-up actions for school districts that intends to implement, or revise their beginning teacher’s mentoring program regarding implications for policy, implication for practice, and recommended research.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

THE PROBLEM

Beginning teachers in urban public school settings are often stressed out by the multitude of job-related factors that accompany the title of beginning teacher in the current era of educational reform. The job of the classroom teacher, though rewarding for many, is complex. Job facets affecting teacher working conditions include class size, availability of teaching resources,
participation in decision-making, classroom facilities, administrator support, and high-stakes accountability (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003).

Building-level public school administrators must acquire a plethora of knowledge about their faculty to ensure success for the students who attend their schools. Teachers are entrusted to be highly qualified professionals equipped to enlighten their students today, as these students become the world leaders of tomorrow. Administrators and teachers must bring their collective talents together for the greater good of all stakeholders involved, i.e., students, teachers, and parents. The purpose of this study is to explore how mandatory mentoring programs relate to increasing the job retention of beginning teachers in urban public schools in district factor group (DFG) “A” in Northern New Jersey.

One-third of the teaching force in the United States turns over each year, with the highest attrition rates occurring in high-needs schools – urban and rural schools with low-income and minority populations (Heineke, Streff-Mazza, & Tichnor-Wagner, 2013). Traditional public schools lost 15.6% of their teachers during the 2013-2014 school year (Sawchuk, 2015). A high level of teacher turnover has grave consequences for the schools and the students they serve.

Many different factors lead new teachers to leave their positions and the field of education entirely. Principals can play an important role in teacher satisfaction and retention by developing a collaborative, supportive working environment (Anhorn, 2008; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007; Shen et al., 2012). The three essential factors for motivation in the workplace are autonomy, mastery, and purpose (Pink, 2010). Other factors have contributed to teachers leaving the profession; 50% of teachers state that managing their classrooms in light of continuous decreases in the school budget and resources to meet school needs is very challenging, and 51% of teachers report that they are “stressed out” from working in “high-needs schools”
(Goldring, Riddles, & Taie, 2014). High-profile efforts to tie teacher evaluations to student test scores, for example, have been met warily by many teachers (MetLife, 2013). Moreover, beginning teachers, in particular, report that one of the main factors behind their decision to depart is a lack of adequate support from school administrators (Ingersoll, 2003). This lack of support for new teachers occurs more in low socioeconomic status (SES) districts (Donaldson, Johnson, Kardos, Kauffman, & Liu, 2004).

Newly hired teachers in lower socioeconomic status schools receive less attention in the areas of recruiting, mentoring, and curriculum development than newly hired teachers in higher-SES schools. The teachers in the low-SES districts are less likely to experience a good preview of their teaching position, less likely to have a good mentoring experience with frequent and substantial interactions, and less likely to have appropriate curricular guidance (Donalson et al., 2004). These findings are significant in light of prior research, which shows that teachers’ success in their first few years of teaching may aid in their retention (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Donaldson et al., 2004).

The hiring of new staff requires more district time and money for training and causes an interruption in the learning process for students. Retention of strong and highly skilled teachers is critical for the achievement of students, specifically those in low-SES communities (Johnson et al., 2004). Studies show that low salaries, difficult working conditions, inadequate preparation, and insufficient support for novice teachers all contribute to the growing number of teachers who do not last beyond the first few years (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, & Webber, 1997).

Many teachers have stated that they have thought about leaving teaching at various points in their careers, but they have learned how to sustain their energy for the work (Williams, 2003). Urban public school districts seek the professionalism and the expertise of highly qualified tenured
teachers to fill their classrooms and provide valuable classroom instruction to their students. Current education reforms have caused an alarming amount of anxiety for many educators. Certain societal factors and a vote of no confidence in the court of public opinion have tarnished the image of this previously fulfilling profession that now have many veteran teachers seeking retirement advice and have many recruiters unable to attract teaching candidates consistently into the profession of instruction. Over the past two decades, there has been an increase in teachers leaving the profession regardless of location, socioeconomic status, and gender. To ensure that the next generation of students receive the quality education that will prepare them for future success, a highly efficient, dedicated, and motivated team of professional teachers is needed to secure that bright future for our students. There is a need to support mentoring programs on the elementary and secondary school levels that include faculty members and administrative teams.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study is to explore in what way, if any, mandatory mentoring programs relate to increasing the job retention of beginning teachers in urban public schools in district factor group (DFG) “A” in Northern New Jersey. The second purpose of this study is to add knowledge to the existing literature describing factors for developing mandatory mentoring programs for beginning teachers in urban public school settings. Few qualitative studies have been conducted on mentoring programs and beginning teachers. This qualitative study will add to the existing knowledge, based on how effective mentoring programs are in increasing the retention of beginning teachers in urban public schools.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The two research questions that this study addresses are:

1. How do beginning teachers describe the mentoring support they received in their current settings?
2. In what ways, if any, have mentoring programs and staff development workshops facilitated professional growth?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Literature and research on mentoring programs for elementary and secondary school teachers during the transition into their non-tenured years in their new profession provide a theoretical framework for looking at whether such supportive programs have a positive effect on the retention of beginning teachers. Chapter II provides a detailed review of the literature and research on the conceptual framework.

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The setting for this study was an urban public school district within DFG “A” in Northern New Jersey. This research was conducted in four elementary and one secondary schools with a grade configuration of first through twelfth grades.

A qualitative study is particularly suited to examine how mandatory mentoring programs may increase the retention of beginning teachers in their current urban public school district. Qualitative research often requires the collection of data via interviews. The interview questions were developed based on the literature review and advice from a jury of expert administrators. This jury consisted of two building-level administrators and one district-level supervisor of Special
Services, who were selected for their many years of service as educational professionals with invaluable knowledge of working closely with beginning teachers. The jury of expert administrators reviewed the interview questions individually and collectively before a total set of interview questions was finalized. The beginning teachers participated in semi-structured interviews lasting 45 minutes each to provide insight into their experiences, their participation in mentoring programs, and their view of the teaching profession as they continue to work in urban public settings with high teacher turnover.

Fifteen sources of data, consisting of fifteen semi-structured interviews of beginning teachers participating in mentoring programs within an urban public school setting, were selected for this study.

The Industrial Gardens Public School District (IGPSD), designated with a DFG rating of “A,” was the urban public school district selected for data collection. This school district is located in Northern New Jersey. I obtained permission from the IGPSD before I could proceed with conducting interviews with their beginning teachers. 1) I sent an introductory letter to the assistant superintendent of schools of the IGPSD seeking permission to conduct research with their beginning teachers. 2) A letter of solicitation was forwarded via email to the pool of potential participants — beginning teachers within the IGPSD. 3) I obtained a list of 30 potential participants by contacting the administrative teams of each school that participated in this study within the IGPSD. 4) From the 22 responses received, a random sample of 15 elementary- and secondary-level beginning teachers was selected via a random numbers table.

Data was collected from the responses during the in-depth interviews with these beginning teachers during the 2017–2018 school year. These participants were guided through a semi-structured interview process and gave consent before the interview to having their responses
recorded. The beginning teachers were selected from all non-tenured teachers employed in the IGPSD during the 2014–2015 through 2017–2018 school years. Beginning teachers’ responses were coded, analyzed thematically, and reported in both numerical and narrative formats. Codes were assigned to discrete pieces of data in an attempt to discover themes that would arise from the responses. Member checking was also used to ensure validity.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has significance for administrators, beginning teachers, district office supervisors, and other stakeholders seeking to understand the challenges with job satisfaction levels perceived by beginning teachers on the elementary and secondary levels in urban public school settings. By exploring these perceptions and gaining a wider understanding of the impact on mentoring programs, principals and policymakers can implement supportive programs to assist these beginning teachers during their non-tenured years. Administrators can explore programs that are deemed appropriate for beginning teachers.

By analyzing the perceptions of the beginning teachers, I identified thematic similarities and differences of beginning teachers that will add to the literature of mentoring programs. Currently, little is understood about this process for principals, beginning teachers, and mentoring programs. Beginning teachers are more successful (and confident) when they are supported by administrators or tenured teachers.

The results of this study may be useful to principals as they analyze the needs of beginning teachers on the secondary school level. It may also provide information to district-level supervisors and policymakers when they are considering mentoring programs for beginning teachers during professional development workshops. The results of this study, when positioned in the mentoring
literature, may provide a broader understanding of the implementation needs for beginning teachers and support, guidance, and orientation programs for them.

LIMITATIONS, DELIMITATIONS, AND BIAS

Here, I will identify potential limitations, delimitations, and bias of the current study. First, in the State of New Jersey, public school teachers obtain tenure status after successfully completing four years and one day of continuous employment within their respective districts. This study will only focus on beginning teachers; it will not explore the perceptions of tenured public school teachers in New Jersey.

Secondly, this urban public school district is located in Northern New Jersey. Urban public school districts located in Central and Southern New Jersey were not included in this study.

Another limitation of this study is the selection of the district factor group (DFG) “A,” which was identified for the urban public school districts. Public school districts with DFG ratings of “B” through “J” were not included in this study. The findings, if any, can only be applied to beginning teachers who have participated in mentoring programs in urban public school districts with similar student demographic populations and grade levels.

All participants were strongly encouraged at the onset of the interviews to respond using their professional and ethical judgment when answering the questions. Teachers were informed that no personally identifiable information would be included as part of the interview responses and that they could choose to participate in or withdraw from the survey at any time. Beginning teachers agreeing to participate in the interview process were asked to sign a consent form to indicate their agreement to participating in the study.
Lastly, only first-year beginning teachers who were participants in the IGPSD’s mentoring program were solicited for this training. Some first-year beginning teachers who were previously employed in another school district prior to being employed in the IGPSD may be biased because they received mentoring program training and professional development from another public school district utilizing various mentoring models, were not included in this study.

**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

*Beginning Teachers:* Any non-tenured public school teachers, in the State of New Jersey, who have less than four years and one day of continuous employment within their respective public school district.

*District Factor Group (DFG):* The system New Jersey uses to identify the socioeconomic status of schools and school districts. The factor groups range from A, which has the lowest socioeconomic status, to J, which is considered a wealthy district.

*Secondary Schools:* The terms “middle school” or “high school” refer to public middle or high schools and do not include private or charter schools.

*Socioeconomic Status:* The economic status of a school or district, based on the income of the residents of that community.

*Teacher Evaluation:* One method used to determine the accountability of teachers.

*School Administrator:* Someone who is responsible for daily operations and leadership at a particular school site. Included in this term are supervisors, principals, and assistant principals.

*Stayers:* Teachers who have remained at the same school.

*Movers:* Teachers who have moved to a different school.

*Leavers:* Teachers who have left the profession.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION
This chapter reviews the important literature on the subject of mentoring programs. It begins with the theories that span the non-tenured years of beginning teachers and includes the history of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 2009, which included large-scale federal investment in education. Chapter II also provides an overview of mentoring programs, theories of secondary schools, and the literature and research related to how well mandatory mentoring programs succeed in increasing the retention of beginning teachers in urban public schools. It is divided into sections that include (a) history of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009, (b) literature review process, (c) theoretical frameworks, (d) needs of beginning teachers, (e) needs for mentoring programs, (f) professional development, (g) administrative support, and (h) program planning. The remainder of this chapter reviews the literature on implementing mentoring programs, followed by professional development recommendations that result from the literature.

Literature and research on mentoring programs during beginning teachers’ non-tenured years provided a theoretical framework for looking at the impact of mentoring programs that are often characteristic of elementary and secondary school environments from the perspectives of beginning teachers.

Studying the perceptions of beginning teachers from prior research conducted by Ingersoll (2004) in general education settings identified three key factors that are crucial to the success of beginning teachers: mentoring programs, guidance, and orientation. By extending this research for administrators and beginning teachers in an urban public school setting, I hope to broaden the perspective on this important topic for an otherwise under-studied population and add to the
knowledge base on how effective mentoring programs are in increasing the retention of beginning teachers in urban public schools.

The review of the literature contains important themes about the problem statement, which include:

- Implementation of mentoring programs at the elementary and secondary school grade levels.
- The increased number of beginning teachers who are leaving the teaching profession.
- Implications of mentoring programs on beginning teachers’ retention.

THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT, 2009

The present state of educational reforms adds factors with which new teachers must contend. The U.S. Department of Education launched Race to the Top as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This competitive federal grant provided more flexibility on the No Child Left Behind (2001) regulations. States can get relief from provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in exchange for efforts to close achievement gaps, promote rigorous accountability, and ensure that all students are on track to graduate from college and are career-ready. The Race to the Top grant requires that beginning teachers be highly qualified and that low-performing schools “turnaround” their performance regarding low student achievement and close the achievement gap. There is also an element of the Race to the Top grant that would include student achievement as part of the new teacher evaluation systems. Many educational practitioners do not believe that the student achievement component of the Race to the Top grant will produce the desired results of rating beginning teachers as highly effective due to low socioeconomic factors that contribute to the achievement gap in students who reside in urban school districts. If,
in addition to identifying and measuring student performance, new evaluation systems focus on improving teacher practice, they have the potential of positively impacting beginning teachers (Darling-Hammond, Newton, & Wei, 2013).

RESEARCH REVIEW PROCESS

The review of the literature related to the effectiveness of mandatory mentoring programs in retention of beginning teachers was conducted using a number of resources found in the Seton Hall University library database, peer-reviewed journals, texts, and websites. Computerized databases included EBSCOhost research databases, ERIC research databases, and ProQuest. Search terms included alternative teacher certification, beginning teachers, job satisfaction, mentoring programs for teachers, perceptions of beginning teachers, teacher education, teacher turnover, and urban education.

NEEDS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

Many beginning teachers enter the teaching profession full of energy and the desire to make a positive impact in the lives of their students. The reality of the situation is that many beginning teachers find themselves ill prepared for what the job requires of them. Many school districts lack an understanding of how to best prepare beginning teachers to meet the challenges in the classroom (Boyd et al., 2009). According to Ganser (1999), beginning teachers with one to three years of teaching experience were surveyed in 15 Wisconsin school districts, and the results of the study indicated that the three most important concerns for beginning teachers were the lack of spare time, the burden of clerical work, and the heavy teaching loads. Many school districts have a teacher-mentoring program designed to support beginning teachers during their first three years (Sterrett...
& Imig, 2011). Around the country, many districts are progressively implementing mentoring programs to assist beginning teachers at the start of their teaching careers. Feiman-Nemser (2012) indicated that providing high levels of support for beginning teachers through mentoring programs could lead to higher rates of retention.

Educators are still at a crossroads on the best way to prepare a beginning teacher for the classroom. As indicated by some studies (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), educators’ commitment to teacher mentoring programs is critical; educators can either support and promote the retention of beginning teachers or undermine the success of mentoring programs and increase teacher attrition. Ingersoll’s mentoring studies revealed real differences in longevity between beginning teachers who were mentored and those who were not mentored (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Beginning teachers’ development has been viewed through a variety of theoretical lenses during the current educational reform movement. Major organizational, self-determination, and behavioral theories are presented as a framework for understanding the perceptions of beginning teachers.

ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY

The present-day demands of this educational reforms era require that beginning teachers have the ability to adapt too many different situations. Roznowski and Hulin (1992) explain that the most interesting form of adaptation is likely to occur for individuals with extreme levels of affect toward their jobs — that is, individuals who are highly dissatisfied or satisfied with their work roles (p. 129). Beginning teachers who display an increased level of loyalty, job satisfaction, and adaptation
in an urban public secondary school setting tend to illustrate a higher rate of retention and longevity than teachers with lower levels of loyalty, job satisfaction, and adaptation.

**SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY**

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a theory of motivation described by Ryan and Deci (2000), is useful to the present study for considering teachers’ motivation to stay in the classroom. SDT explores how intrinsic and extrinsic motivators are regulated by three basic psychological human needs: feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The importance of SDT in regard to beginning teachers is that if beginning teachers can use intrinsic and extrinsic motivators of competence, autonomy, and relatedness, then this could reverse the trend of nearly half of all beginning teachers leaving the teaching profession within the first five years of their career. When a beginning teacher is not necessarily motivated by the job, extrinsic motivation must be summoned in order to fulfill the job responsibilities. Beginning teachers who remain in the teaching profession must channel external factors into internal factors in order to relate to their colleagues, their students, and their school climate and to stay in the teaching profession. Researchers theorize that people turn extrinsic motivators into intrinsic motivators through internalization due to their psychological need for relatedness (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Internalization refers to “taking in” value or regulation from the external to make it an internal regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71). Beginning teachers require intrinsic motivation to develop feelings of competence that enable them to stay in the classroom. Gagne and Deci (2005) argue that when work climates foster the three psychological needs, intrinsic motivation is enhanced, leading to greater job satisfaction and persistence (p. 337).
The *Academic Leadership Journal* (2012) illustrated these concerns in its report on beginning teachers in urban settings. While teachers often enter the education profession full of energy and optimism, the reality is that beginning teachers in urban public school settings are associated with students of color, students from impoverished backgrounds, and schools that lack necessary resources to ensure academic success for their students. The success of beginning teachers during their non-tenured years will be determined by how well they navigate through the developmental stages of the following factors: teacher retention, school climate, and meaningful support. According to the *Academic Leadership Journal* (2012), many realities contribute to teacher retention, including lack of administrative support, classroom management issues, poor working conditions, low pay, and the aging teacher population and early retirements. Mentoring programs that beginning teachers receive have a direct effect on their development and performance (Athanases et al., 2008).

**BEHAVIORAL THEORY**

According to Brock and Grady (2001), novice teachers who start their teaching careers in an unstructured environment are more likely to experience a less positive climate and even isolation. In the 20th century, the influence of environment or school culture on beginning teachers’ professional development was described by theorists such as Michael Fullan (1993). He states that novice teachers enter the profession with commitment, passion, and an idealistic view of teaching, determined to make a difference in the lives of their students. Often, they face challenging teaching assignments, inadequate working conditions, lack of resources, and isolation. Shocked by the realities of teaching, they encounter a system that fails to value its beginning teachers as one of its most precious resources. Fullan’s work illustrates the need for public school districts to implement a district-wide mentoring program that educates, supports, and values its beginning teachers at the
very start of their teaching careers. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2007), school districts must make a valuable investment in the quality of beginning teachers at the outset of their teaching career. This support needs to be sustained throughout the novice teachers’ professional careers.

Gordon and Maxey (2000) synthesized important factors that beginning teachers may experience in their classroom environment, listing ten developmental stages for these teachers. They suggested that if these needs are met, it is likely that the novice teacher will progress and develop into a successful teacher. The stages include adjusting to the teaching environment and role planning; organizing and managing instruction as well as other professional responsibilities dealing with individual students’ needs, interests, abilities, and problems; managing the classroom; obtaining instructional resources and materials; using effective teaching methods; communicating with colleagues, including administrators, supervisors, and other teachers; communicating with parents; motivating students; receiving emotional support; and assessing students and evaluating student progress (p. 6).

Organizational characteristics include complying with all directives from the building’s administration, having procedural systems in place such as classroom management policies for students, and obtaining an “effective” rating on the teacher evaluation model. Such a rating would make the beginning teacher “satisfied,” but this would only motivate the teacher to continue to work harder to achieve a “highly effective” rating on the next teacher evaluation. The self-determination characteristics described by the authors reflect a shift from the beginning teacher’s extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation of instruction and ultimately the reason for staying in the teaching profession.
Theorists who are interested in mentoring research are concerned with mentoring programs, guidance, and orientation opportunities that occur with beginning teachers. They suggest that school districts, building-level administrators, and policymakers promote professional educational staff developmental workshops based on the deficiencies of beginning teachers as described in the literature.

**HISTORY OF MENTORING PROGRAMS**

As a result of these recommendations, pairing new teachers with mentors is a practice catching on in schools across the country (Black, 2001, p. 46). Black (2001) noted that the scale of mentoring has increased rapidly over the past two decades, with more than 30 states mandating some form of mentor support for novice teachers (p. 46). The National Education Association referred to mentoring programs as professional lifelines for beginning teachers. Policymakers and school leaders view mentoring as a way to retain teachers, thus cutting costs associated with recruiting, hiring, and training new staff (Black, 2001, p. 46). They also see mentoring as an important component in overall school improvement and reform (Black, 2001, p. 46). New Jersey’s 2001 state budget included $2 million to cover the costs associated with mentor training and stipends for mentor teachers in several pilot programs across the state (Black, 2001). The training, provided by the combined efforts of the school district and the union, is intended to help beginning teachers experience success with classroom management and instructional strategies (Black, 2001). In other cases, the school district’s mentor program is negotiated into the teachers’ union contract as a formal condition of employment (Black, 2001, p. 47).

Regrettably, many cases exist in which overall enthusiasm for mentoring has been eroded because the purposes of mentoring have not been clearly communicated. There is still much room
for improvement in designing strong mentoring programs that will position beginning teachers to be successful and effective, as well as grow into educational leaders.

Unfortunately, many educators subscribe to the notion that all a beginning teacher needs is a mentor. School districts tend to support mentoring as an effective and singular approach, whereby a veteran teacher has been haphazardly selected by the principal and assigned to a new teacher (Wong, 2004b, p. 108). Researcher Feiman-Nemser noted that after 20 years of experimenting with mentoring as a process for helping novice teachers, few comprehensive studies have validated its effectiveness (as cited in Wong, 2004b, and p. 108).

NEEDS FOR MENTORING PROGRAMS

Barry Sweeny (1994) stated that schools should identify their “purpose for mentoring.” Included in these purposes are the following:

(a) To speed up the learning of the new teachers and reduce the stress of transition
(b) To improve instructional performance through modeling by a “top performer”
(c) To attract new staff in a very competitive recruiting environment
(d) To retain excellent veteran staff in a setting where their contributions are valued
(e) To respond to state, district, or contractual mandates
(f) To promote the socialization of new staff into the school “family,” values, and traditions.

Sweeny suggested that all mentor coordinators should identify their purposes and design activities and events for each goal.
IMPLEMENTATION OF A MENTOR PROGRAM

In the report *Informal, Available, Patient*, Susan D. Whitaker (2000) stated beginning teachers cherished informal meetings with mentors who taught the same content to similar students. Whitaker (2000) surveyed 200 beginning special education teachers and found six lessons to be considered when planning and implementing mentor programs:

**Activities** Beginning teachers perceived informal unscheduled meetings as both the most frequent and most effective” (Whitaker, 2000, p. 23). Scheduled meetings were not considered as effective, and telephone and written contacts were perceived to be the least effective. Beginning teachers noted infrequent observations by their mentors, but found them to be useful. “To be effective, the mentor had to have at least weekly contact with the beginning teacher” (Whitaker, 2000, p. 23).

**Content** The content of the mentoring most often focused on emotional support for the novice teachers. Second to that, “assistance with the mechanics of teaching, such as learning policies and procedures, locating materials and resources, and getting to know staff” (Whitaker, 2000, p. 23) was the type of content reported in the survey. Surprisingly, beginning teachers perceived assistance with issues that directly impacted student learning, such as assessment, curriculum, instruction, lesson planning, or discipline, as infrequent and relatively ineffective.

**Characteristics** Beginning teachers rated the mentor’s “specialized knowledge of both policy/procedures and specialized pedagogy” (Whitaker, 2000, p. 23) as most important. Second to that in importance to beginning teachers were the personal qualities of their mentors related to approachability and availability, good communication skills, trustworthiness, patience, sensitivity, confidence, and enthusiasm. Beginning teachers rated the general professional knowledge of the mentor as slightly less important as the personal qualities noted.
The Match  Novice teachers felt the most effective relationships were with mentors who taught the same content area and had similar age students, similar teaching styles, and common planning periods. “They did not perceive being of the same gender as important, nor did same gender pairing result in significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of the mentoring” (Whitaker, 2000, p. 23).

Effects  “Mentoring relationships perceived as effective improved job satisfaction and resulted in significant increase in the likelihood of the teacher remaining in the teaching profession, although the effect size was small (significant at the .05 level of confidence)” (Whitaker, 2000, p. 23).

Whitaker summed up her report by stating the following: “While assistance from an experienced teacher can be mandated, developing truly effective mentoring relationships depends on the match between the teachers, their willingness and desire to participate in the relationship, and the frequency and quality of the contacts between them” (Whitaker, 2000, p. 23).

NEW JERSEY’S MANDATORY MENTORING PROGRAM

In 2014, the New Jersey Department of Education required that all newly hired public school teachers in New Jersey must participate in a mandatory mentoring program with a mentor within their school district. Table 1 gives a brief overview of the requirements for all newly hired teachers and their school districts to fulfill the mandatory mentoring program.

Table 1

New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Overview of 2014 New Jersey Teacher Mentoring Regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A9B-8)
Background

Effective May 5, 2014, the rules for new teacher mentoring have been amended to better align with the TEACHNJ Act of 2012, to reduce district-reporting burdens, and to promote flexibility and accountability for district implementation. Each public school district is still required to implement a system of supports for new teachers. Studies of support programs for new teachers have documented their effectiveness in transitioning teachers into practice. A comprehensive district mentoring program, as described in these regulations, aims to:

- Assist first-year teachers in the performance of their duties and adjustment to the challenges of their teaching assignment;
- Reduce novice teacher attrition;
- Improve the effectiveness of new teachers; and
- Enhance teacher knowledge of, and strategies related to, the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) to facilitate student achievement and growth.

For more information, please visit http://www.nj.gov/education/profdev/mentor/ or email teachpd@doe.state.nj.us.

Updates in Regulations

The regulations expand the scope of support, which districts must provide to novice teachers (those new to the profession and serving under a provisional certificate) and experienced teachers new to a district. Individual 1-1 mentoring is still required for novice teachers. In addition, all non-tenured first-year teachers must receive individualized support developed collaboratively with the supervisor and aligned with state standards and school/district expectations for teacher effectiveness. In addition, regulations:

- Specify a comprehensive orientation to the district for all new first-year teachers;
- Specify minimum mentoring requirements during the critical first weeks of employment;
- Specify particular mentor support activities for novice teachers;
• Update the training and experience requirements for teachers serving as 1-1 mentors;
• Require a log to record all contact time between the 1-1 mentor and the novice provisional teacher (see this Optional Mentoring Log Template for an example);
• Require all mentor payments to be handled by the district’s administrative office;
• Give the chief school administrator (CSA) responsibility for district mentoring plan development;
• Require the CSA to share the plan with the district board of education for review of fiscal impacts;
• Require the CSA to submit a Statement of Assurance to the Department that the district is meeting the requirements for the mentoring program; and
• Align the three required formative and summative evaluations of the novice provisional teacher with required observations through Achieve NJ.

1 Non-public schools may choose to follow the requirements, which align to their operations. Novice teachers serving under the Charter School Certificate of Eligibility are not subject to these requirements.  

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New Jersey  
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The following tables provide detailed comparisons between the amended mentoring regulations and the previous requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Area of Focus</th>
<th>Previous Regulations</th>
<th>Regulation Adopted May 5, 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Implementation &amp; Accountability</td>
<td>Mentoring plan development</td>
<td>Created by Local Professional Development Committee</td>
<td>CSA is responsible for creating the plan and determining implementation logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Initially approved by district board</td>
<td>• Must be submitted to district board for review of fiscal impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Submitted to executive county superintendent for final approval</td>
<td>• CSA must submit Statement of Assurance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Area of Focus</th>
<th>Previous Regulations</th>
<th>Regulation Adopted May 5, 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Supports for Non-tenured, First Year Teachers</td>
<td>Experienced teacher new to district</td>
<td>School level implementation</td>
<td>Review of plan effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice teacher, traditional route (holding Certificate of Eligibility with Advance Standing)</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Plan revised every 3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 weeks of 1-1 mentoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Plan must be reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Statement of Assurance must be submitted annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Plan must be shared with each School Improvement Panel (ScIP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ScIP oversees implementation at school level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive orientation to district policies and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Individualized supports specified in the professional development plan (PDP) based on level of preparation and experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>New PDP created within 30 days of new management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor/mentee meet at least</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- NJDOE notified of a plan approval
- Plan kept in district
- Assurance to County Office
- Plan must be reviewed annually
- Statement of Assurance must be submitted annually
once/week for first 4 weeks of assignment
• Mentor lead mentee in guided self-assessment on district’s teacher practice instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Novice teacher, alternate route (holding Certificate of Eligibility)</th>
<th>34 weeks of 1-1 mentoring with additional supports in first weeks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|  | • Comprehensive orientation to district policies and procedures  
• One full school year of 1-1 mentoring from beginning of assignment, pro-rated for part-time teachers  
• Mentor/mentee meet at least once per week for the first 8 weeks of assignment  
• Mentor leads mentee in guided self-assessment on district’s teachers evaluation instrument  
• Mentor aligns support to mentee’s preparation curriculum |

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<p>| Requirement | Area of Focus | Previous Regulations | Regulations Adopted May 5, 2014 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Selection, Training, &amp; Payment</th>
<th>Letters of recommendation</th>
<th>Required</th>
<th>Optional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>Required; whenever possible in same subject area as novice teacher</td>
<td>Same as before</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Effectiveness                        | Demonstrated command of content and pedagogy | Mentor demonstrates a record of success in the classroom  
Beginning in 2014-15, mentor has earned a summative rating of Effective or Highly Effective on most recent summative evaluation  
In cases where summative evaluation is delayed, mentor has earned rating of Effective or higher on teacher practice instrument |
| Teaching experience                  | At least 3 years  
Currently active | At least 3 years, with at least 2 completed within previous 5  
Currently active |
| Knowledge of district                | Understands resources and opportunities available and is able to act as referral source  
Understands social and workplace norms of | Same as before |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidentiality</th>
<th>district and community</th>
<th>Defined in regulations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor agrees to maintain confidentiality</td>
<td>Mentor may not serve as mentee’s direct supervisor or conduct evaluations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional relationship</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>• District makes provision for training</td>
<td>• Training of mentor required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mentor agrees to complete comprehensive training program</td>
<td>• District makes provision for training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Training program curriculum unspecified</td>
<td>• Training program curriculum must include, at minimum, training on the district’s teacher evaluation rubric and practice instrument; the NJ Professional Standards for Teachers; the NJ Core Content Curriculum Standards; classroom observation skills; facilitating adult learning; and leading reflective conversations about practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment procedures</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>• Mentor must keep logs of contact time with mentees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mentors submit logs to district office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Payment of mentors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
updated by the district administrative office
- Mentees may not pay mentors directly

3 Since the Office of Evaluation has only provided conversions from numerical scores to rating categories for the summative score and not for evaluation components, the district should make its own determination about how to use the teacher practice score to identify eligible mentors in these cases.

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DIFERENCE BETWEEN INDUCTION AND MENTORING

The terms induction and mentoring are often incorrectly used as synonyms within the education profession; however, they are not the same (Wong, 2003). Wong (2003) defines induction as “an organized, sustained, multiyear program structured by a school or district, of which mentoring may be an integral component. Induction is a group process, one that organizes the expertise of educators within the shared values of culture” (p. 2). Wong (2003) further defines mentoring as “a one-on-one process” in which a veteran teacher supports a new teacher, usually during the first year of teaching. In Table A, Wong (2003) clarifies the distinct differences between mentoring and induction.

Table A The difference between mentoring and induction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentoring</th>
<th>Comprehensive Induction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on survival and support</td>
<td>Promotes career learning and professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relies on a single mentor, or shares a mentor with other teachers</td>
<td>Provides multiple support people and administration — district and state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treats mentoring as an isolated phase</td>
<td>Treats induction as a part of a lifelong professional development design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited resources spent</td>
<td>Investment in an extensive, comprehensive, and sustained induction program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reacts to whatever arises</td>
<td>Acculturates a vision and aligns content to academic standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**TEACHER RETENTION**

Research suggests that as many as 40% to 50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Brown & Wynn, 2007; Hughes, 2012; Simos, 2013; Watlington et al., 2010). To decrease the rate of teachers leaving the teaching profession within the first couple of years of their new careers, beginning teachers need a support system/framework in place that will encourage their professional growth and offer assistance during this time.

**FINANCIAL BENEFITS OF A MENTORING PROGRAM**

School districts with a successfully implemented mentoring program can save money. According to Portner (2005), the estimated cost of recruiting and training a teacher, then replacing them when they leave a district, is $50,000. Mentoring programs save school districts money by reducing their need to recruit, hire, and train new teachers. The school district enjoys a reduced teacher turnover rate, and the money that is saved by the school district on recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers can be spent on other budgetary concerns.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A mentoring program for beginning teachers should offer systemic and effective professional development activities and skills that will enhance their instructional delivery in the classroom over the course of their career. The goal of professional development during the initial years of teaching should be to instill the importance of being a lifelong learner and continuing professional growth, as well as to offer strategies that can be used immediately and effectively in the classroom (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Taranto, 2011). These professional development workshops must be formalized; be goal oriented, with an obtainable goal; offer positive, constructive feedback from a coach or supervisor; and ultimately hone and develop the instructional teaching strategies of the beginning teacher. Furthermore, the professional development offered to novice teachers must consist “of regular learning opportunities to expand content knowledge, address diverse learning needs, manage student behavior and improve pedagogical skills” (Wiebke & Bardin, 2009, p. 34). Wong (2003) states that good teachers are retained by “structured, sustained, intensive professional development programs that allow new teachers to observe, to be observed by others, and to be part of networks or study groups where all teachers share together, grow together, and learn to respect each other’s work” (as cited in Wong 3 p. 46).

Professional development should allow opportunities for new teachers to observe others, to be observed by others, and to be part of a collaborative environment where all teachers can share and grow together to improve teaching practices and student learning (Wong, 2004). Professional development for beginning teachers is important to effectively ensure that the high standard of educational excellence is being delivered to students every day. Research has shown that the only component that has consistently improved the confidence and instructional pedagogy of beginning
teachers is effective ongoing professional development. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2003), the following criteria must be considered for creating highly qualified beginning teachers who can meet high standards:

- Possess a deep understanding of the subjects they teach
- Show evidence of a firm understanding of how students learn
- Demonstrate the teaching skills necessary to help all students achieve high standards
- Use a variety of assessment strategies to diagnose and respond to individual learning needs
- Demonstrate and integrate modern technology into the school curriculum to support student learning
- Collaborate with colleagues, parents and community members, and other educators to improve student learning
- Reflect on their practice to improve future teaching and student achievement
- Pursue professional growth in both content and pedagogy
- Instill a passion for learning in their students. (p. 5)

In an attempt to comply with state mandates to provide a new teacher mentoring program to beginning teachers before the start of a school year, many school districts construct a new teacher seminar that is aimed at assisting beginning teachers via professional development workshops over the course of a few days prior to the start of a school year. The school districts that adopt this rushed approach of professional development will not see the greatest possible growth of their beginning teachers, and this may ultimately result in an increase in the teacher turnover rate within those districts. Research suggests that professional development must consist of more than a three-day workshop at the beginning of the school year; rather, professional development must be ongoing and embedded in the daily practices and activities of the school
culture in order to promote change in teacher practices (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). The Regional Education Laboratory Southwest examined more than 1,300 studies on professional development. According to the study, teachers who received an average of 49 hours of professional development during their first year of employment increased student achievement by 21 percentile points. Studies also indicate that teachers who received more than 14 hours of professional development showed a positive increase in student achievement. Conversely, studies indicate that teachers who participated in 5–14 hours of professional development showed no significant effects on student achievement (Regional Education Laboratory Southwest, 2008).

**ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT**

Administrative support is “the extent which principals and other school leaders make teachers’ work easier and help them to improve their teaching” (Boyd et al., 2010, pg. 5). Three dimensions of support are recognized as essential for the administrator-teacher relationship: emotional, and informational (Littrell, Billingsley, & Cross, 1994). Emotional support includes the principal demonstrating trust in the teacher, being available to communicate, and showing interest in the teacher’s work. Informational support includes encouraging teacher development through attendance at in-services and workshops, as well as providing immediate suggestions for teacher improvement in the classroom (House, 1981). Teachers satisfied with their work and committed to their job identified both emotional and informational support from their principal as key factors (Littrell et al., 1994). Both types of support were also needed by beginning teachers, who sought instructional feedback from principals, assistance with parental concerns, and some contribution to their overall development and well-being as a teacher (Anhorn, 2008; Kutcy & Schulz, 2006).
Beginning teachers have expectations regarding the amount of support they receive from their administrators while participating in a new-teacher-mentoring program. Beginning teachers want their principals to communicate to them the prevailing criteria for good teaching and how they are stacking up against those expectations (Andrews & Martin, 2003).

Principals can also support beginning teachers by creating a school environment that is safe, supports new instructional teaching methods, and offers ongoing professional development designed to enhance and retain beginning teachers. To provide the assistance necessary to support beginning teachers, a principal needs to participate in professional learning to become an effective instructional leader (Richardson, 2008).

The 2006 MetLife survey indicates that teachers who are more likely to leave are those who have principals who do not ask for suggestions, do not show appreciation for their work, and do not treat them with respect (as cited in Richardson, 2008). Professional interactions with the principal are crucial to the retention status of beginning teachers because ultimately it is the principal who determines the hiring and renewal or nonrenewal status of beginning teachers. Although school culture is important to the retention of beginning teachers, principals must allocate time to get to know them and establish informal and formal meetings, classroom walkthroughs, classroom observations, and conversations to accurately assess them. In research on the recruitment and retention of teachers, Gaytan (2008) asserted that “because working conditions are essential to teachers’ satisfaction with teaching and their careers, it is crucial for school administrators to gain a thorough understanding” of those working conditions (p. 125).
PROGRAM PLANNING

Programs for beginning teachers’ job satisfaction in urban public school settings have been recommended to support specific pre-service programs. The literature on mentoring programs suggests that with thoughtful, proactive planning, beginning teachers in urban public school settings adjust more readily to the changes in the three theories from conceptual framework associated with elementary and secondary schools when these conditions are present: (1) beginning teachers display an increase level of loyalty, job satisfaction, and adaptation; (2) employers convince beginning teachers that they are appreciated and that there is opportunity to advance; and (3) teachers’ motivation increases due to social/environmental factors often attributed to human needs theories influenced by the educational settings. Typically, activities such as pre-service college programs, traditional student-teaching programs, traditional and alternative education route programs, mentoring programs with veteran teachers and supervisors, and district-approved workshops on professional development and mentoring are offered as means to support beginning teachers. If implemented correctly, these programs are invaluable resources to beginning teachers. These programs can be offered to all beginning teachers, and may be useful to many of them, but unfortunately not every beginning teacher may find these programs useful. Some beginning teachers may still need resources that go beyond the programs mentioned above to address the administrative support, orientation, and guidance opportunities that should be made readily available to beginning teachers.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Some studies that were reviewed indicated that the retention rates of beginning teachers in urban elementary and secondary school settings, are aligned with mandatory mentoring programs. An
increase in the awareness of the difficulties associated with the professional responsibilities of a beginning teacher warrants the involvement of the schools’ administration within the elementary and secondary school settings to ensure longevity in beginning teachers’ careers. Theories that view insufficient organizational factors, overwhelming social/environmental factors, and dominant behavioral factors were explored as they relate to the mismatch that often occurs in urban public school settings. Research studies that found decreases in organizational, self-determination, and behavioral issues, along with increases in support, guidance, and orientation opportunities, following the mentoring programs on the elementary and secondary levels were reviewed. A lack of opportunities for support, guidance, and orientation associated with beginning teacher status on the elementary and secondary school levels was presented. Research has found that the school climate of the educational setting places beginning teachers at risk for failure, as they are not matched to the developmental needs associated with many students who attend urban public schools. Chapter III will describe the methods by which these factors will be explored as they relate to beginning teachers and mandatory mentoring programs in urban public school settings.
CHAPTER III  
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY  

THE PROBLEM  

Local and national public school districts around the country are aware that teacher retention is a 
problem. A possible contributing factor for reducing the teacher turnover rate is a strong, 
comprehensive mentoring program. 

A qualitative study is particularly suited to examine beginning teachers’ beliefs and 
perceptions about job satisfaction and remaining in their current urban public school district. 
Qualitative research often requires the collection of data via interviews. Jackson (2009) posits that 
participants answer the questions and researchers describe the responses given to assess the 
components of the program and to guide considerations for improvement to the beginning teacher 
program. 

I have professional experience working as an administrator on the elementary and 
secondary levels in an urban public school district. Currently, I am working as an elementary 
school administrator in an urban public school. The numerous educational reforms within the 
teaching profession have resulted in many retirements, resignations, and terminations. It has 
become increasingly difficult for administrators to maintain a full teaching roster within their 
schools. The teaching shortage within my school district and across the nation tweaked my interest 
in conducting this study. 

My research explored the Industrial Gardens Public School District mentoring program, 
which consisted of the mentoring program’s requirements, goals, and objectives. My evaluation
of the mentoring program was gathered by interviewing beginning teachers and learning their perceptions of the mentoring program. The process of the program evaluation allowed me to analyze the data to determine whether the components of the beginning teacher program were successful in meeting the needs of beginning teachers in the district. By analyzing the interview responses, I identified key themes related to the impact of the beginning teacher mentoring program. Finally, the mentoring program review allowed me to determine whether the goals and objectives of the beginning teacher mentoring program were met. Findings from this source were compared and analyzed to reveal the various themes and outcomes of the district’s beginning teacher mentoring program. This chapter will provide an outline of the mentoring programs that serve beginning teachers in urban public school district in Northern New Jersey.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The primary purpose of this study is to explore in what way, if any, mandatory mentoring programs relate to increasing the job retention of beginning teachers in urban public schools in district factor group (DFG) “A” in Northern New Jersey. The second purpose of this study is to add knowledge to the existing literature describing factors for developing mandatory mentoring programs for beginning teachers in urban public school settings. Few qualitative studies have been conducted on mentoring programs and beginning teachers. This qualitative study will add to the existing knowledge, based on how effective mentoring programs are in increasing the retention of beginning teachers in urban public schools.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The two research questions that this study addresses are:

1. How do beginning teachers describe the mentoring support they received in their current settings?

2. In what ways, if any, have mentoring programs and staff development workshops facilitated professional growth?

POPULATION

The Industrial Gardens Public School District (IGPSD) is an urban public school district located in Northern New Jersey. It was purposefully selected for this qualitative case study to obtain similarities from the perspectives of beginning teachers on the impact of mentoring programs and the amount of administrative support they received that assisted in sustaining longevity in the teaching profession. The idea behind the qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will help the researcher understand the problem and research questions (Creswell, 2003, p. 185). The City of Industrial Gardens can be described as a predominantly urban, low socioeconomic status, ethnically diverse community. One high school, one middle school, and ten elementary schools serve approximately 8,000 students in the district; 82% of the students receive free or reduced-price lunches. The organizational leadership structure of the district includes a superintendent and an assistant superintendent of curriculum. For the purpose of this qualitative study, the field site and the names of beginning teachers have been changed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.
The participants were asked to voluntarily contribute to this qualitative study. They included beginning teachers from the IGPSD who participated in the district’s mentoring program. Here are the steps I followed in setting up a pool of participants for the interviews. 1) I sent an introductory letter to the assistant superintendent of schools of the IGPSD seeking permission to conduct research with the beginning teachers within that school district. 2) I obtained a list of potential participants by contacting the administrative teams of several elementary and secondary schools located within the IGPSD. 3) A letter of solicitation was forwarded via email to a pool of 30 beginning teachers within the IGPSD. 4) From the 22 responses received, a random sample of 15 elementary- and secondary-level beginning teachers from the IGPSD was selected via a random numbers table.

Participants were from schools that represent low-socioeconomic DFG “A.” All participants were asked to contribute to this study through an introductory letter (Appendix D) detailing the study and assuring them of their anonymity. I made follow-up telephone calls to set up individual interviews with participants. All participants were given an Informed Consent form (Appendix E), which included contact information for the researcher and Seton Hall University, and an initial questionnaire identifying basic characteristics of the participants involved.

The interviews were conducted at the participants’ convenience as their schedules allowed. As I had obtained interest from more than fifteen beginning teachers in participating in this study, each participant who was not among the fifteen chosen received a letter thanking them for volunteering their services but informing them that the study had exceeded the necessary quota.
INSTRUMENTATION

The interview questions were developed based on the literature review and advice from a jury of expert administrators. The jury of experts consisted of two building-level administrators and one district-level supervisor of Special Services. These individuals were selected for their many years of service as educational professionals, with invaluable knowledge of working closely with beginning teachers. The jury of expert administrators reviewed the interview questions individually and collectively before a total set of interview questions was finalized. Completion of the participants’ responses were designed to take approximately 25 to 45 minutes. The set of interview questions explored beginning teachers’ beliefs about professional development and mentor support. To protect confidentiality after the completion of the interview, each participant was assigned an identification code that corresponded to the participant’s responses. Within the set of interview questions, beginning teachers were asked to describe the impact of mentoring programs and staff development workshops meant to assist with their growth in this profession. They were also asked to describe the amount of mentor support that they receive in their current setting for sustaining longevity in the teaching profession.

DATA COLLECTION

Approval of this qualitative study was obtained from the assistant superintendent of schools of the Industrial Gardens Public Schools District. Upon approval to conduct the study, an email was sent to all beginning teachers in the IGPSD requesting their participation in the study. The 30 potential teachers were informed of procedures, the intent of the study, and the potential risks of participating in the study. Teacher were informed that no personally identifiable information would be included as part of the interview responses; therefore, beginning teachers could choose to
participate or to withdraw from the survey at any time. From the positive responses received, a random sample of fifteen (15) elementary-and secondary-level beginning teachers was selected. Coding information was used to identify and report the information collected. Beginning teachers agreeing to participate in the interview process were asked to sign a consent form to indicate their agreement in participating in the study. Consent forms included contact information for the researcher and Seton Hall University.

DATA ANALYSIS

Ten interview questions were analyzed to gain data. The participants were pre-coded Beginning Teacher #A1, Beginning Teacher #A2, Beginning Teacher #A3, and so on to protect their identities. Before the interview questions were administered, a standardized script was used to add the elements of confidentiality, reliability, and validity of the data. No beginning teacher was identifiable or recognizable in the research. The beginning teachers read and signed the consent letter and completed the interview. The last page of the interview questions asked the beginning teachers to consent to participating in individual interviews.

The interviews were conducted at specific locations that provided convenience and privacy for the beginning teachers. They took place in the following locations: a public coffee shop, a conference room, and the classrooms of several of the beginning teachers. Use of an interview guide ensured consistency in data collection. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed by me. Glesne (2006) noted the fact that a researcher is likely to gather more data than originally thought; therefore, by the end of data collection, a researcher should expect to feel overwhelmed by the quantity of information amassed. To avoid this dilemma during this study, data gathering was approached with methodical organization (Glesne, 2006).
This process made the volume of information and data collected less intimidating and easier to manage (Glesne, 2006).

Data was sorted into analytical files, coding schemes to manage the data were developed (Glesne, 2006). The schemes were logged into a codebook as a means of methodological organization (Glesne, 2006). Ultimately, these coding schemes became themes (Glesne, 2006; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Open coding, also known as substantive coding, is conceptualizing on the first level of abstraction (Glaser, 1978). Written data from the field notes or transcripts are conceptualized line by line. In the first stages of data analysis, everything is coded to identify the problem and resolution techniques. Often, coding is done in the margins of transcripts and field notes (Glaser, 1978). Thus, the first step of the coding process consisted of open coding. Upon transcription of interviews, typing of notes, and sorting and arranging of the data, a careful reading of this information led to concentrated reflection on its overall meaning (Glaser, 1978). Additionally, the interview responses and transcripts were read and reread, notes were made, and key words were highlighted as appropriate. Then, an initial set of codes and categories was developed based on the data. Selective coding was done after having developed the initial set of codes or categories of the participants in resolving any concerns they may have had.

Table B Interview Questions Aligned with Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do beginning teachers describe the mentoring support they received in their current settings?</td>
<td>1. Did your school’s administrative team or district offices provide you with professional development, or a mentor to assist you during your non-tenured years? If so, what did they provide?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Has professional development or the lack of, influenced you in being effectively knowledgeable of your district teachers’ observation model?</td>
<td>3. What professional development training would you like to see offered to beginning teachers who work in urban public school districts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In what ways, if any, have mentoring programs and staff development workshops facilitated professional growth?</td>
<td>4. As a non-tenured teacher, do you feel that you received an adequate amount of support from your mentor? Why or why not? If so, how did your mentor support you? If not, what could your mentor have done?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Has mentor support or the lack of, influenced you to remain in this school district?</td>
<td>6. How much mentor support for the formal observations and walk-throughs by the school’s administration or district office did you receive prior to being evaluated?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. What type of feedback have you received from your mentor after being evaluated? Please be specific.

8. What mentor supports, if any, have you received in dealing with problematic students that are disruptive to the learning environment in your classroom?

9. What are some examples of mentor support that you received in regard to taking instructional risks as it relates to the curriculum in the classroom?

10. How can mentors support beginning teachers working in this urban public school district?

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS
As a qualitative researcher, I needed to be aware of ethical issues inherent in the researcher-participant process when collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data. Confidentiality was preserved by using pseudonyms as identification when reporting data. When interviewing participants, I needed to be aware of any personal biases based on my experience and research. Before conducting observations, I made participants aware of my role and the rationale for the study. To establish trustworthiness and credibility as a researcher, full disclosure of the purpose of
my research study was provided to all participants. Also, beginning teachers could have chosen to walk away from the study at any time without penalty.

**VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

To increase reliability and validity, I checked the data that I obtained from the interviews and compared and crosschecked data among and between beginning teachers. The responses from the interview process underwent member checking to help improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity as necessary to enhance reliability. The purpose of the interview questions was to obtain information from the beginning teachers about their perceptions regarding the influence of teacher mentoring programs, professional workshops, and mentor support to help them remain in their career. Permission to record the interview was requested prior to each interview session. All participants were informed of the need and the rationale for recording the interviews for the reliable and valid collection and analysis of data in this study.

According to Merriam (2009), reliability is difficult to achieve in the interview process because what is being studied in the social world is assumed to be in flux, multifaceted, and highly contextual and because information gathered is a function of who gives it and how skilled the researcher is at getting it. Despite the lack of reliability inherent in qualitative studies, if replicated, the validity construct of this study may support the study design and result in replicable outcomes. Interview questions were designed to support the research questions under study and were aligned with theoretical constructs that provide the framework of the study.
Presentation of the Data

Table C Participants’ Demographic/Descriptive Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race and Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biracial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Attainment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table C illustrates a diverse group of beginning teachers by race, gender, and educational attainment. Of all the beginning teachers surveyed, nine were Black, three were White, two were Hispanic, and one was Biracial. Ten of the beginning teachers were female, and five were male. Nine had attained master’s degrees, while a bachelor’s degree was the highest degree earned by six.

Table D Years of Employment, and Teaching Experience in Current District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience (yrs.)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current District</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table D is the findings of years of employment and teaching experience in the Industrial Gardens Public School District. Three beginning teachers were teaching for their first year, in their current district. Four beginning teachers were teaching with two years of teaching experience, both in their current district. Four beginning teachers were teaching with three years of teaching experience, all in their current district. Lastly, four beginning teachers were teaching with four years of teaching experience, all in their current district.

**Table E Professional Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades Taught</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PK–3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9–12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects Taught</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Subjects</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table E, Professional Characteristics, describes beginning teachers by the current grade levels and content areas that they taught. Five beginning teachers taught in grades PK–3, one taught in grades 4–5, and nine taught in grades 9–12. Three beginning teachers taught English, one taught Social Studies, three taught Science, six taught all subjects, and two beginning teachers taught other subjects.
CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter III explains the importance of mentoring programs in the retention of beginning teachers. The elements of qualitative research design were employed in this study. This chapter includes a description of the population, sample, instruments, and methods used to conduct research. The processes of data collection and data analysis are also included. The chapter also reviews the ethical considerations important in consideration of my research.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study is to explore in what way, if any, mandatory mentoring programs relate to increasing the job retention of beginning teachers in urban public schools in district factor group (DFG) “A” in Northern New Jersey. The second purpose of this study is to add knowledge to the existing literature describing factors for developing mandatory mentoring programs for beginning teachers in urban public school settings. By exploring these perceptions of how mandatory mentoring programs contribute to beginning teachers’ retention in urban public school settings in Northern New Jersey, and by gaining a wider understanding of the impact on mentoring programs, principals and policymakers can implement supportive programs to assist these beginning teachers during their non-tenured years. The purpose of the research questions was to obtain from teachers their perceptions of how mandatory mentoring programs contribute to beginning teachers’ retention in urban public schools in Northern New Jersey. Are there elements of the mandatory mentoring teacher program that are perceived by stakeholders as being the most effective for increasing teacher retention? Questions were semi-structured and open-ended to solicit in-depth, thoughtful answers.

The two research questions that this study addresses are:

1. How do beginning teachers describe the mentoring support they received in their current settings?

2. In what ways, if any, have mentoring programs and staff development workshops facilitated professional growth?
RESEARCH QUESTION #1

1. How do beginning teachers describe the mentoring support they received in their current settings?

The findings for Interview Question #1, Interview Question #2, and Interview Question #3 suggest that the majority of beginning teachers in the Industrial Gardens Public School District were satisfied with the amount of support they had received while participating in the district’s mentoring program during their first year of employment. However, some beginning teachers who participated in the district’s mentoring program expressed their disappointment with some of the shortcomings they had experienced. These disgruntled beginning teachers said they rarely met with their mentoring teachers, and the mentoring teachers often did not have the same content area/grade level as their beginning teacher. Thus, the mentoring teachers offered little useful professional advice to assist their beginning teachers.

To fully assess the effectiveness of its mentoring program, the IGPSD must obtain data as well as feedback from mentoring teachers and beginning teachers who have participated in its mentoring program. By fully assessing the pros and the cons from all stakeholders who have participated in the mentoring program, the IGPSD’s administrators and program coordinator can plan and implement new resources, strategies, and technology to fully serve the mentoring teachers as well as the beginning teachers.

The findings as they relate to Interview Question #1: Did your school’s administrative team or district offices provide you with professional development, or a mentor to assist you during your non-tenured years? If so, what did they provide? The majority of beginning teachers were quite pleased with the amount of professional development and mentor support they had received from their administrative team or district offices. Also, in regard to Interview
**Question #1,** some beginning teachers expressed their frustration with their mentor and with ineffective professional development that did not properly assist them during their first year in the classroom.

The findings as they relate to **Interview Question #2: Has professional development or the lack of, influenced you in being effectively knowledgeable of your district’s teacher observation model?** The majority of beginning teachers had concerns that the district’s professional development did not make them feel that they were effectively knowledgeable of the district’s observation model. Also, those teachers that did respond “Yes,” they were effectively knowledgeable of the district’s observation model, stated that they became knowledgeable of this model due to weekly departmental meetings, and through the assistance of their grade level and content level supervisors.

The findings as they relate to **Interview Question #3: What professional development training would you like to see offered to beginning teachers who work in urban public school districts?** The responses for **Interview Question #3** were fairly even. These beginning teachers expressed that they wanted professional development workshops that dealt with implementing current technology into their instructional delivery, utilizing effective classroom management strategies, and employing effective strategies to deal with the social and emotional needs of students.

The first three Interview Questions, which relate to Research Question #1, show that the majority of the beginning teachers who participated in the IGPSD’s mentoring program stated that they did receive enough support during their first year of employment. However, some beginning teachers also stated several shortcomings within the mentor program. These shortcomings were mentors who did not regularly meet with their mentees, mentors who were not knowledgeable of
their mentees’ subject content or grade level, and professional development workshops that did not address what beginning teachers needed to be successful in their classroom.

INTERVIEW QUESTION #1

Did your school’s administrative team or district offices provide you with professional development, or a mentor to assist you during your non-tenured years? If so, what did they provide?

Table F

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective Mentor &amp; PD</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective Mentor &amp; PD</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eleven beginning teachers responded quite favorably to the IGPSD mentor program and professional development that was provided to them during their first year of employment, stating that both were effective. One beginning teacher shared that “My mentor co-planned and wrote lesson plans with me.” Many of these beginning teachers said that their mentor took them under their wing and took time out of their own schedule to show them how the profession truly works. A second beginning teacher stated, “My mentor created higher order thinking questions together with me.” Again, many of the beginning teachers knew that this was not required by their mentors, but they truly appreciated their mentors’ commitment to their own growth. Another beginning teacher said, “We reviewed strategies such as student engagement in the classroom.” Lastly, a few beginning teachers said they had regular weekly meetings with their mentors.

Only four out of the fifteen teachers recalled enrolling in the district’s professional development workshop that was offered at the start of the school year. One beginning teacher said, “I felt frustrated.” Although this teacher expressed frustration about not meeting with their mentor
on a regular basis, they stated, “My mentor’s workload is so large that he cannot meet with me.”
Another beginning teacher stated, “My mentor was not knowledgeable of my content area.” This teacher added, “There should be a supervisor of the mentor program that properly aligns the mentors and the mentees together along content area, or grade level. To pair me up with someone that does not have a clue of what I teach is frustrating.” One beginning teacher stated that she was a mid-year hire, and thus missed the district’s professional development workshops that were offered at the beginning of the school year. “She missed everything that all of the new teachers received regarding the professional development. I am just trying to survive to the end of the year.”

**INTERVIEW QUESTION #2**

**Has professional development or the lack of, influenced you in being effectively knowledgeable of your district’s teacher observation model?**

**Table G**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No, not effectively</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, effectively</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially effective</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eight beginning teachers responded that “No,” professional development did not influence them in being effectively knowledgeable of their district’s teacher observation model. Several of the beginning teachers stated, “No, professional development did not make me effectively knowledgeable of the district’s teacher observation model.” One beginning teacher stated, “I became knowledgeable of the district’s observation model via my department supervisor, or during departmental meetings, but not from professional development.” Some of the teachers stated, “The PD that we received dealt with classroom management and lesson plans but did not address the district’s teacher observation model enough.”
Six beginning teachers said “Yes,” professional development did influence them in being effectively knowledgeable of their district’s teacher observation model. One beginning teacher stated, “Yes, the district’s professional development workshops that were offered at the beginning of the school year, and the follow-up professional workshops throughout the year like ‘in-service days’ made her feel effectively knowledgeable of the district’s teacher observation model.”

Some of these six teachers said that although the district’s teacher observation model was briefly touched upon during the district’s sanctioned professional development workshops, they felt that they really received the bulk of their knowledge regarding that model during their departmental meetings run by their supervisor.

One beginning teacher responded that professional development did influence him/her in having “partially effective” knowledge of the district’s teacher observation model. This teacher also stated, “I am a new teacher, and with time and support I am confident I will become truly knowledgeable of the district’s teacher observation model.”

**INTERVIEW QUESTION #3**

What professional development training would you like to see offered to beginning teachers who work in urban public school districts?

**Table H**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current technology workshops</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management strategies</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social &amp; emotional needs of the students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six beginning teachers responded that they would like to see professional development workshops that show how to implement “current” technology into their instructional delivery. One beginning teacher stated, “I would like to see technology PD that prepares our students for 21st century
professions.” Yet another beginning teacher said, “PD workshops showing how to utilize Google Apps into our lessons.” A third beginning teacher reported, “During the district’s professional workshops, there should be a technology PD session, that shows new teachers how and where to access ‘technology’ related resources, on the district’s website.”

Another six beginning teachers responded that they would like to see professional development workshops that show how to utilize effective classroom management strategies. One first-year teacher stated, “I would like to have PD workshops that equip me to handle students in challenging situations.” Another beginning teacher said, “The district should provide us with PD on the most effective ‘best practices’ for assisting with maintaining positive classroom management strategies specific to our own school.”

Three beginning teachers shared that they would like to see professional development that deals with the social and emotional needs of the students under their supervision. These teachers stressed the importance of and the need for a PD workshop that gives new teachers strategies to understand those social and emotional needs. One beginning teacher stated, “I’m a new teacher and I need to understand more about the neighborhoods and family backgrounds of my students. I am not from an urban environment, and although I now work in an urban environment, I do not know the culture of this school, nor the culture of many of my students. The district should offer PD that gives teachers background on the lives of these students, and their cultures.”

To summarize, “How do beginning teachers describe the mentoring support they received in their current settings?” Most beginning teachers in the IGPSD were satisfied with the amount of support they had received while participating in the district’s mentoring program during their first year of employment. However, a small minority of beginning teachers who also participated in the district’s mentoring program expressed their disappointment with some of the shortcomings
they had experienced in it. These disgruntled beginning teachers said they rarely met with their mentoring teachers, and the mentoring teachers often did not have the same content area/grade level as their beginning teacher; thus, the mentoring teachers offered little useful professional advice to assist their beginning teachers.

**RESEARCH QUESTION #2**

2. In what ways, if any, have mentoring programs and staff development workshops facilitated professional growth?

The findings for Interview Questions #4–10 suggest that beginning teachers in the IGPSD were satisfied with the amount of support they had received while participating in the district’s mentoring program during their first year of employment. The findings also illustrate that the district’s mentoring program needs to be more customized to fully address the needs of the beginning teachers.

The findings as they relate to **Interview Question #4: As a non-tenured teacher, do you feel that you received an adequate amount of support from your mentor? Why, or why not? If so, how did your mentor support you? If not, what could your mentor have done?** The majority of beginning teachers stated they were satisfied with the overwhelming amount of support they had received from their mentors. These beginning teachers said their mentors had supported them by sharing content-related resources with them. The mentors often kept to their schedules and met with the beginning teachers for their regular “weekly mentoring meetings.” The mentors also assisted and co-wrote lesson plans with their beginning teachers, and they provided feedback to the beginning teachers with the purpose of making lesson plans more effective upon review by the school’s administration. Also, in regard to **Interview Question #4**, some beginning teachers
reported that their mentors could have provided more assistance while they participated in the mentoring program. Some of these beginning teachers said that they did not receive any support from their mentors. Others said they would have greatly benefited from the mentor program if their mentors had guided them through the process. Lastly, other beginning teachers said their mentors never met with them even though they had regularly scheduled weekly meetings.

The findings as they relate to Interview Question #5: Has mentor support or the lack of, influenced you to remain in this school district? The majority of beginning teachers were satisfied with the support they had received from their mentors, and they stated that if it were not for the support of their mentors, they would have left the IGPSD. Other beginning teachers reported the opposite when asked the same question, saying the lack of support that they received from their mentor is the main reason why they are leaving the IGPSD.

The findings as they relate to Interview Question #6: How much mentor support for the formal observations and walkthroughs by the school’s administration, or district office, did you receive prior to being evaluated? The responses for Interview Question #6 were fairly evenly matched. The majority of beginning teachers responded that the amount of mentor support they received prior to being evaluated was effective for them. These teachers said they often reviewed the district’s teacher observation model with their mentor prior to being evaluated. Conversely, a high percentage of beginning teachers responded negatively, saying they did not receive any mentor support prior to being evaluated by the school’s administration. These teachers further stated that they never reviewed the district’s walkthrough rubric or the district’s teacher observation model with their mentor prior to being evaluated.

The findings as they relate to Interview Question #7: What type of feedback have you received from your mentor after being evaluated? Please be specific. The responses for
Interview Question #7 were again evenly divided among the beginning teachers. They stated that the feedback from their mentors ranged from general comments, such as “Hang in there, you’re doing a great job,” to self-evaluation when some of the mentors suggested that the beginning teachers review their score from a recent evaluation and instructed them to critique their own evaluation for areas of improvement. Mentors also used constructive criticism with their beginning teachers in areas pertaining to instructional delivery and to their classroom environment.

The findings as they relate to Interview Question #8: What mentor support, if any, have you received in dealing with problematic students that are disruptive to the learning environment in your classroom? The majority of beginning teachers that responded to Interview Question #8 stated that their mentors advised them to address disruptive students immediately, to get assistance from the school’s administration in regard to discipline, and to contact the students’ parents for additional support. Some beginning teachers’ responses to this question said that they did not receive any mentor support when dealing with problematic students.

The findings as they relate to Interview Question #9: What are some examples of mentor support that you received in regard to taking instructional risks as it relates to the curriculum in the classroom? The majority of beginning teachers stated that their mentors advised them to teach at a pace slower than the district’s pacing guide to ensure that the students fully comprehended the content and to administer multiple teachers’ assessment to be compiled for data. Some beginning teachers said they were advised by their mentors to supplement secondary sources with primary sources regarding literature in their students’ native tongues. Others said their mentors did not tell them anything regarding taking instructional risks as it relates to the curriculum in the classroom.
The findings as they relate to Interview Question #10: How can mentors support beginning teachers working in this urban public school district? Many of the beginning teachers responded that they would like the opportunity to participate in peer observations, or have their mentors observe them teaching in the classroom. Some stated they would like more common planning time with their mentors to properly write effective lesson plans. Others said the mentor program should last longer than one year, and their mentors should have the same content area as the beginning teacher.

The last seven Interview Questions that relate to Research Question #2 show that many of the beginning teachers who participated in the IGPSD’s mentoring program stated that they did receive enough support during their first year of employment. However, these same beginning teachers also stated an increased amount of frustrations due to the shortcomings of the mentoring programs. Some of these shortcomings were that mentors and beginning teachers did not share the same content area, mentors did not offer any support/advice to assist struggling beginning teachers, and mentors need to observe the beginning teachers they are mentoring.

INTERVIEW QUESTION #4

As a non-tenured teacher, do you feel that you received an adequate amount of support from your mentor? Why, or why not? If so, how did your mentor support you? If not, what could your mentor have done?

Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I received an adequate amount</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, I did not receive an adequate amount</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eleven beginning teachers responded “Yes, I received an adequate amount” of support from their mentor. One beginning teacher responded, “I received more than adequate support from my mentor.
regarding sharing resources and meeting with my mentor during our regularly scheduled weekly meetings.” Another beginning teacher stated, “My mentor was very supportive. Although we didn’t always meet during our regularly scheduled meetings, we always talked every day via daily check-ins, which were quick informal conversations.” A third beginning teacher said, “My mentor was more than adequate in supporting me through the process, from guiding me and providing me with feedback on lesson planning, modeling lessons for me, and reviewing my observation results with me.”

Four beginning teachers stated “No, I did not feel that I had received an adequate amount” of support from their mentor. One beginning teacher stated, “No, I did not receive any support from my mentor!” When asked what their mentor could have done to assist them during their first year, the same beginning teacher said, “Guide me through the process!” Another beginning teacher stated, “No, I did not receive adequate support from my mentor because he was not available to meet with me, due to his workload schedule.” Findings suggest that some mentors were unable to meet with their mentees due to time constraints, and this prevented those beginning teachers from receiving adequate support.

INTERVIEW QUESTION #5

Has mentor support or the lack of, influenced you to remain in this school district?

Table J

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, influenced to remain in the district</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not, influenced to remain in the district</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eleven beginning teachers responded “Yes,” the amount of mentor support they received influenced them to remain in this school district. One beginning teacher stated, “The overwhelming
support from my mentor is one of the major factors that will keep me in this district.” A second beginning teacher stated, “Yes, so if I didn’t get that mentor support I would have quit.” A third beginning teacher stated, “Yes, my mentor has definitely influenced me to stay in this district, because the first year was kind of tough.” Lastly, another beginning teacher said, “Yes, because of the supporting nature and guidance of my mentor and my administration, I do plan to stay in the district.”

Four teachers responded “No,” the lack of mentor support they received influenced them not to remain in this school district. One beginning teacher stated, “The lack of mentor support was the deciding factor why I will leave this district.” Another beginning teacher stated, “No, I don’t feel like her support was something that would influence me to stay in this school district.”

INTERVIEW QUESTION #6

How much mentor support for the formal observations and walkthroughs by the school’s administration, or district office, did you receive prior to being evaluated?

Table K

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient support received prior to evaluation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient support received prior to evaluation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eight beginning teachers responded “Yes,” they did receive sufficient mentor support for the formal observations and walkthroughs by the school’s administration or district office prior to being evaluated. One beginning teacher stated, “Yes, I received mentor support for the formal observations and walkthroughs by reviewing the district’s walkthrough checklist with my mentor prior to the start of observations and walkthroughs.” Others stated they reviewed higher-order thinking questions with their mentor prior to walkthroughs or being evaluated. A second beginning
teacher said they reviewed the pre-conference form with their mentor prior to observations and walkthroughs. Lastly, a third beginning teacher stated they reviewed the domains and standards of the district’s teacher observation model with their mentor prior to being evaluated.

Seven beginning teachers stated, “No, I never reviewed a walkthrough rubric, or anything with the district’s teacher observation model prior to being evaluated.” One beginning teacher stated, “No, we never reviewed or looked through a rubric prior to any walkthrough or observation.” Another beginning teacher said, “No, prior to my observation, I didn’t have a concrete idea of what was expected for walkthroughs and observations.” A third beginning teacher said, “No, my mentor was more concerned with smaller things like lesson plans, classroom management, creating an effective classroom lesson, and how to modify my lessons.”

INTERVIEW QUESTION #7

What type of feedback have you received from your mentor after being evaluated? Please be specific.

Table L

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General comments</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessment/self-evaluation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructive criticism</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six beginning teachers responded that they received general comments as feedback from their mentors after being evaluated. One beginning teacher responded, “My mentor would see me in passing after I was evaluated and say, ‘Hey, hang in there, you’re doing a great job.’” Another beginning teacher stated, “After I was evaluated, my mentor asked me, was I treated fairly?”
Five beginning teachers responded that they received strategies on how to “self-assess/evaluate” from their mentor after being evaluated. One beginning teacher said, “My mentor recommended that I reteach the lesson again to my students, after I was evaluated.” Another beginning teacher stated, “My mentor and I sat down and reviewed my score, then we went through the district’s teacher observation model together, and then my mentor had me self-assess myself, and asked me what score I would assign myself.” A third beginning teacher stated, “My mentor and I reviewed a rubric that the administration use immediately after a walkthrough. It’s great for instant feedback of what you’re doing right and what you need to improve on.” Lastly, a fourth beginning teacher responded, “I showed my mentor the evaluation, and she went over it with me and she basically said this is where you can improve.”

Four beginning teachers stated that they received “constructive criticism” comments, e.g., “You should display more students’ work,” in regard to the classroom environment of the district’s teacher model.

INTERVIEW QUESTION #8

What mentor supports, if any, have you received in dealing with problematic students that are disruptive to the learning environment in your classroom?

Table M

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management strategies</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No mentor support w/problematic students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nine beginning teachers stated that they received advice on implementing effective classroom management strategies from their mentor. Several of the beginning teachers said they were instructed by their mentor: “Don’t wait, write them up, and call their parents when dealing with
problematic students.” Other beginning teachers responded by implementing rewards charts, to visually reinforce positive behavior in their classroom. One beginning teachers responded, “Implementing a timer kept the students on task and assisted with the pacing of the lesson, which contributed to less disruption in the classroom.”

Six beginning teachers responded that they did not receive any mentor support in dealing with problematic students who are disruptive to the learning environment in the classroom.

INTERVIEW QUESTION #9

What are some examples of mentor support that you received in regard to taking instructional risks as it relates to the curriculum in the classroom?

Table N

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tweaking the curriculum</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizing secondary resources</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seven beginning teachers stated that they were encouraged to “tweak the curriculum” while teaching their students. One beginning teacher stated, “I am teaching a dual enrollment course that is affiliated with a local college. I tweaked the curriculum for this course so that my students can successfully pass this course and receive both high school and college credit. … I taught at a pace slower than the pacing guide, used multiple strategies to engage my students in the learning, and constantly checked for understanding.” Another beginning teacher indicated, “I met the students where they are, and tried to increase student engagement by asking multiple higher-order thinking questions according to Bloom’s Taxonomy, hoping for increased student achievement.” A third beginning teacher said, “My mentor suggested that I implement some differentiated instruction
strategies into my instructional delivery. … She told me to teach to the skill, not to the book. Find out the standards, and teach to the standard. Present the information in a way that I am comfortable, deviating from the curriculum when necessary.”

Five teachers stated that they did not receive any mentor support in regard to taking instructional risks.

Three beginning teachers were encouraged to “obtain secondary resources” during their instructional delivery. One beginning teacher recalled, “Whenever resources are scarce in this department, we would share resources in our classes. These resources were not necessarily purchased by the district, but these resources did allow us to supplement the district-provided materials.” Another beginning teacher stated, “I used the district-provided primary resources in my class. English is not the native language for many of my students, so to further engage my students, I supplemented many of the primary texts with secondary articles that are written in languages that are native to my students.”

INTERVIEW QUESTION #10

How can mentors support beginning teachers working in this urban public school district?

Table O

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal peer observations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-planning/common planning time</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Program lasts longer than one year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six beginning teachers stated that mentors should conduct “informal peer observations” on their mentees. One beginning teacher stated, “If we can have our mentor sit-in and observe us in a non-punitive manner, or if we can sit-in and observe a veteran teacher, then I think this would be the
best form of modeling the district can provide to beginning teachers.” A second one said, “Mentors must visit our classrooms! Mentors must observe beginning teachers themselves, not only the administration. By conducting peer observations, and by working with us, our mentor can add insight on where we can improve our craft as beginning teachers in this profession.” Other beginning teachers had very similar responses, saying, “Mentors must make time to visit our classrooms and observe us while we are teaching.”

Five beginning teachers stated that mentors should utilize common planning time to co-plan and write the lesson plans with beginning teachers. One beginning teacher stated, “Our mentors need to sit with us and co-plan with us regarding the lesson planning template. Currently, the lesson planning template is non-teacher-friendly, averages around 20 pages. That’s too much, we need guidance with co-planning and writing our lesson plans.” Another beginning teacher stated, “We need to have common planning time with an experienced teacher built into our schedule, to help us with everything that is expected from us.”

Four beginning teachers stated that the mentor program should last longer than one year. These same respondents also suggested that if possible, a mentor should be assigned with the same content area or grade level as the beginning teacher. One beginning teacher stated, “The mentoring program should last longer than one year, if needed by the beginning teacher.” A second one stated, “Mentors should be able to see the growth or lack of growth between the first year and the second year of the new teacher.”

To summarize, “In what ways, if any, have mentoring programs and staff development workshops facilitated professional growth?” Beginning teachers in the Industrial Gardens Public School District were satisfied with the amount of support they had received while participating in the district’s mentoring program during their first year of employment. The findings also illustrate
that the district’s mentoring program needs to be revised to fully address the needs of the beginning teachers.

Beginning teachers responding said mentoring teachers must visit their classrooms. These same beginning teachers also suggested that if possible, a mentor should be assigned with the same content area/grade level as the beginning teacher. Other beginning teachers stated that by conducting peer observations, and by working with them, their mentors can add insight on where they can improve their craft as beginning teachers in this profession. Lastly, some beginning teachers said that their mentors need to sit with them and co-plan with them regarding the lesson-planning template.

CHAPTER SUMMARY
A glimpse of the responses regarding the mentoring programs that appeared to be the most effective for increasing teacher retention emerged from the interviews conducted with beginning teachers located in the Industrial Gardens Public Schools District. “During the interviews and the following transcription of data, certain themes and patterns also emerged regarding the importance of an effective mentoring program that possesses the elements of professional development to keep all teachers improving towards increasing their effectiveness” (Wong, 2004a, p. 42). These patterns and themes are discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER V

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study is to explore in what way, if any, mandatory mentoring programs relate to increasing the job retention of beginning teachers in urban public schools in district factor group (DFG) “A” in Northern New Jersey. The second purpose of this study is to add knowledge to the existing literature describing factors for developing mandatory mentoring programs for beginning teachers in urban public school settings. Few qualitative studies have been conducted on mentoring programs and beginning teachers. This qualitative study will add to the existing knowledge, based on how effective mentoring programs are in increasing the retention of beginning teachers in urban public schools.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Are there elements of the mandatory mentoring teacher program that are perceived by stakeholders as being the most effective for increasing teacher retention? The two research questions that this study addresses are:

1. How do beginning teachers describe the mentoring support they received in their current settings?

2. In what ways, if any have mentoring programs and staff development workshops facilitated professional growth?

The following is a brief summary of the highlights from Chapter IV regarding beginning teachers’ responses to the research questions.
RESEARCH QUESTION #1

1. How do beginning teachers describe the mentoring support they received in their current settings?

The findings for Research Question #1 suggest that the majority of beginning teachers in the Industrial Gardens Public School District were satisfied with the amount of mentor support they had received while participating in the district’s mentoring program during their first year of employment. However, some beginning teachers expressed their disappointment with some of the shortcomings they had experienced regarding the lack of mentor support they had received in that program.

The findings for Research Question #1 were inconsistent. The majority of beginning teachers were satisfied with the amount of mentor support, while some of them were not satisfied with the amount of mentor support they received during their participation in the mentoring program.

RESEARCH QUESTION #2

2. In what ways, if any, have mentoring programs and staff development workshops facilitated professional growth?

The findings for Research Question #2 suggest that the majority of beginning teachers in the IGPSD were satisfied with the beginning teachers’ mentoring program staff development workshops, which facilitated professional growth during their first year of employment. However, some beginning teachers who also participated in the district’s mentoring program expressed their disappointment with some of the shortcomings of staff development workshops that did not facilitate their growth. The findings for Research Question #2 were also inconsistent.
Mentor Support Received

The purposes of mentoring programs are to support beginning teachers and to increase beginning teachers’ retention in local school districts. This goal will only be achieved when local school districts implement effective mentoring programs that support their beginning teachers. Feiman-Nemser (2012) indicated that providing high levels of support for beginning teachers through mentoring programs can lead to higher rates of retention. Research suggests that as many as 40% to 50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Brown & Wynn, 2007; Hughes, 2012; Simos, 2013; Watlington et al., 2010). The training, provided by the combined efforts of the school district and the union, is intended to help beginning teachers experience success with classroom management and instructional strategies (Black, 2001). Many school districts have a teacher mentoring program assigned to support beginning teachers during their first three years (Sterrett & Imig, 2011).

Participants responding positively to Research Question #1 typically received more mentor support while in the mentoring program than their colleagues, who did not receive an adequate amount of mentor support. The reason for the difference between the beginning teachers who stated they received adequate mentor support and those who received too little or no mentor support rests solely on the quality of mentor support that was received by the beginning teachers. Many school districts lack an understanding of how to best prepare beginning teachers to meet challenges in the classroom (Boyd et al., 2009). If school districts lack a basic understanding of how to best support their beginning teachers within their own district’s mentoring program, this could have an adverse effect on the beginning teacher, the school, and the mentoring program, resulting in the beginning teacher possibly leaving the school district and even the teaching profession. Unfortunately, many educators subscribe to the notion that all a beginning teacher
needs is a mentor. School districts tend to support mentoring as an effective and singular approach, whereby a veteran teacher has been haphazardly selected by the principal and assigned to a new teacher (Wong, 2004b, p. 108). “Educators’ commitment to teacher mentoring programs is critical; educators could either support and promote the retention of beginning teachers or undermine the success of mentoring programs and result in teacher attrition.” Ingersoll’s mentoring studies revealed real differences in longevity between beginning teachers who were mentored and those who were not mentored (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Mentoring programs for beginning teachers vary a great deal from school district to school district. Although many different mentoring programs have been implemented across the country, all mentoring programs were established to support beginning teachers. Barry Sweeny (1994) stated that schools should identify their “purpose for mentoring.” Included in these purposes are the following:

(a) To speed up the learning of the new teachers and reduce the stress of transition
(b) To improve instructional performance through modeling by a “top performer”
(c) To attract new staff in a very competitive recruiting environment
(d) To retain excellent veteran staff in a setting where their contributions are valued
(e) To respond to state, district, or contractual mandates
(f) To promote the socialization of new staff into the school “family,” values, and traditions.

Research has illustrated that the following characteristics are elements of a successful mentoring program in New Jersey:

- Assist first-year teachers in the performance of their duties and adjustment to the challenges of their teaching assignment;
• Reduce novice teacher attrition;
• Improve the effectiveness of new teachers; and
• Enhance teacher knowledge of, and strategies related to, the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) to facilitate student achievement and growth.

The characteristics listed above are crucial characteristics of a successful mentoring program. Although the mentoring program within the Industrial Gardens Public School District did not include all of those characteristics, it did include several of them. The findings based on the interviews from the beginning teachers illustrated that the characteristics of the mandatory mentoring program actually began before the first day of school, within the IGPSD. Beginning teachers stated that they had participated in the district’s New Teacher Orientation, which was a series of professional development workshops held the week prior to the first day of school. All beginning teachers said they were assigned to a mentoring teacher by the school district during their first year of employment.

Eleven beginning teachers responded quite favorably to the IGPSD mentor program. One beginning teacher shared that “My mentor co-planned and wrote lesson plans with me.” Many of these beginning teachers said that their mentor took them under their wing and took time out of their own schedule to show them how the profession truly works.

Since the early 1980s, mentoring has received increased attention as part of reform agendas at the local, state, and national levels. However, actual research on the benefits of mentoring is scarce (Breaux & Wong, 2003). Currently, much of the research on mentoring has tended to focus on things such as how meaningful mentoring activities should be designed, what components mentoring programs should include, what criteria should be used in the selection of mentors, and
what types of training should be provided to prospective mentors (Breaux & Wong, 2003, p. 55). The term “mentoring” also implies “A trusting, supportive relationship between a more-experienced member and less-experienced member of an organization” (Breaux & Wong, 2003, p. 59). “Mentors are assigned to respond to a new teacher’s day-to-day crises, providing teaching tips” (Wong, 2004b, p. 108). When these elements of a successful mentoring program are not implemented correctly, frustration and resentment can easily settle in with beginning teachers. Novice teachers felt that the most effective relationships were with mentors who taught the same content area and had similar age students, similar teaching styles, and common planning periods. “They did not perceive being of the same gender as important, nor did same gender pairing result in significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of the mentoring” (Whitaker, 2000, p. 23).

Professional Development Received

Six beginning teachers said “Yes,” professional development did influence them in being effectively knowledgeable of their district’s teacher observation model. Those same six teachers said that although the district’s teacher observation model was briefly touched upon during the district’s sanctioned professional development workshops, they felt that they really received the bulk of their knowledge regarding the district’s teacher observation model during their departmental meetings run by their supervisor.

Some of the beginning teachers who participated in the Industrial Gardens Public School District New Teacher Orientations expressed their frustrations with the professional development that was offered to them prior to the start of the school year. It was this frustration, along with other perceived negative characteristics regarding professional development throughout the year
involving the mentoring program, which had some of these beginning teachers saying that they may seek employment in other school districts.

Eight beginning teachers’ responses were “No,” professional development did not influence them in being effectively knowledgeable of their district’s teacher observation model. Several of the beginning teachers stated “No,” professional development did not make them effectively knowledgeable of their district’s teacher observation model. Ongoing professional development is a crucial characteristic of most successful mentoring programs.

**The Implications can be the basis for Chapter V**

Although one cannot generalize from this case study of this urban school district in Northern New Jersey, there may be insights that can be derived from this study that are useful for other school districts in the creation and implementation of an effective mandatory beginning teachers’ mentoring program.

- Mandatory beginning teachers’ mentoring programs vary from school district to school district; however, all effective and successful beginning teachers’ mentoring programs should share common practices and common goals. Although the beginning teachers’ mentoring program of the IGPSD may not have implemented all of the research-based elements of a successful beginning teachers’ mentoring program, it did include several common effective practices and common goals. Some of these effective practices included offering beginning teachers professional development and mentoring before the start of the new school year, integrating the mentoring process, and including a structure for modeling effective instruction.
- Mentors play a key role in the success of the mentoring program. Mentors provide support and feedback to beginning teachers, and strong mentoring can improve the overall effectiveness of the mentoring program. The role of the mentors in this study was to provide support to beginning teachers.

- Beginning teachers’ interviews indicate that there are secondary outcomes that are positives of the mentoring process. While the purpose of the mentoring program is to support beginning teachers, research does suggest that the mentor also benefits from the mentoring process. Professional growth, reflective practice, renewal, collaboration, and contributions to teacher leadership are all benefits that mentors can gain from the mentoring process. Through this lens, teaching mentoring can be viewed as a professional development that is part of the district’s comprehensive design.

- “Although providing emotional support is important in the mentoring process, the value of helping new teachers learn to create safe classroom environments, engage all students in worthwhile learning, work effectively with parents, and base instructional decisions on assessment data” (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, p. 6) should not be overlooked.

- Based on this case study, professional development opportunities offered through the beginning teachers’ mentoring program resulted in teacher retention. Many factors contributed to the success of teacher retention. The school district that participated in this case study appeared to have embraced mentor support as a predictor of teacher retention, and to believe that professional development offered through their mentoring program resulted in teacher retention. As mentoring programs for beginning teachers increase, the ways that mentor support and professional development correlate to teacher retention become increasingly important.
• Several beginning teachers who participated in this case study stated that the professional development offered through the mentoring program made them less confident that the district’s mentoring program was effective in increasing teacher competence.

• Beginning teachers’ responses varied, with some indicating that they were not sure whether a direct correlation between the mentoring experiences and beginning teacher competence could be drawn, while others believed a positive link between the two existed. If what beginning teachers know and can do is the determining factor in teacher retention, the effects of the mentoring program on teacher retention are of great importance. If school districts are serious about student achievement, they must also be serious about mentoring support for beginning teachers.

IMPLICATION FOR POLICY

My findings suggest that the Industrial Gardens Public School District’s mentoring program was only partially effective, because of its inconsistencies and deficiencies of characteristics which are generally implemented in a successful mentoring program. Data provided by beginning teachers in this study add to and support the existing literature on the challenges associated with the implementation of a beginning teachers’ mentoring program. The research also provides a structure for implementing a beginning teachers’ mentoring program. The findings, which correlate with existing literature, as indicated above, suggest more work and time are needed to improve the existing mandatory mentoring programs in New Jersey.

I recommend that the New Jersey Department of Education begin to implement induction programs for beginning teachers and move on from mentoring programs. Induction programs include all of the characteristics of traditional mentoring programs but generally last 3–5 years.
longer than mentoring programs, so they offer additional support and growth as beginning teachers gain confidence in their profession.

**IMPLICATION FOR PRACTICE**

All beginning teachers in New Jersey must participate in a mandatory mentoring program. Presently implemented, most mentoring programs are not equipped to successfully prepare beginning teachers for their profession. In order to better prepare them to be successful in their classrooms, school districts in New Jersey should adopt characteristics of, or totally begin to implement, an Induction Program model to assist beginning teachers. Please refer to Table A in the List of Tables.

Induction is a structured program that includes basic purposes of providing instruction in classroom management and effective teaching strategies; reducing the difficulty of transition into teaching; and [maximizing] the retention [rate] of highly qualified teachers” (Breaux & Wong, 2003, p. 5). “Research repeatedly affirms that induction is the key to helping new teachers succeed and the most successful Induction Programs are effective in increasing competence because the treatment of induction is a part of a lifelong professional development design” (Wong, 2004a, p. 42).

**RECOMMENDED RESEARCH**

I would like to make the following recommendations for the interpretation of the data included in this study:

1. The research included only fifteen teachers from one urban public school district for analysis. Further research should be conducted with a larger and more diverse sample.
2. A quantitative study could be conducted across districts to analyze what makes mentoring programs successful or unsuccessful.

3. Beginning teachers and mentors should be paired with one another based on the same subject content area and/or grade level.

4. The New Jersey Department of Education should evaluate those school districts that have implemented induction programs in their school districts and determine whether induction programs or mentoring programs are more effective regarding retention of beginning teachers in New Jersey.

CONCLUSION

Research on the correlation between mentoring and induction programs and teacher retention would be valuable for districts considering the implementation of formal mentoring and induction programs, or for districts looking to revise or strengthen their current programs. For those districts that are exploring totally revising their mentoring programs, including characteristics of a successful induction program may be beneficial. Being able to identify those characteristics of successful mentoring and induction programs that have the greatest impact on teacher retention would be very beneficial to school districts. Also, research from districts that have mandatory mentoring programs and/or induction programs in place regarding the manner in which mentor support and professional development link to teacher retention would be helpful.

Examining the impact of mentor support and professional development on beginning teachers’ retention would give districts great information to consider as well. Continued research focused on the various outcomes of beginning teacher mandatory mentoring programs would provide beneficial information to districts. Examples of research questions might include these:
Are there characteristics of mentors and/or beginning teachers that maximize results? Are there differences in outcomes related to how mentors are selected, trained, and compensated? As colleges and universities continue to evaluate, assess, and revamp their teacher preparation programs, is there a relationship between this professional preparation and the effectiveness of beginning teachers’ mandatory mentoring programs?

Since mentoring continues to be a very popular teacher development tool, research that studies the effects of various types of mentoring programs would provide valuable information. Is one type of mentoring program, e.g., by a veteran/experienced teacher, novice teacher learning communities, or peer coaching, deemed to be most effective? Are there schools or districts that are experiencing significant gains in teacher retention directly related to mentoring characteristics? The challenge for districts is to develop and implement mandatory mentoring and induction programs that support the needs of beginning teachers.
REFERENCES


Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development. (2005). *National Reports*


Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Did your school’s administrative team or district offices provide you with professional development, or a mentor to assist you during your non-tenured years? If so, what did they provide?

2. Has professional development or the lack of, influenced you in being effectively knowledgeable of your district teachers’ observation model?

3. What professional development training would you like to see offered to beginning teachers who work in urban public school districts?

4. As a non-tenured teacher, do you feel that you received an adequate amount of support from your mentor? Why or why not? If so, how did your mentor support you? If not, what could your mentor have done?

5. Has mentor support or the lack of, influenced you to remain in this school district?

6. How much mentor support for the formal observations and walk-throughs by the school’s administration or district office, did you receive prior to being evaluated?

7. What type of feedback have you received from your mentor after being evaluated? Please be specific.

8. What mentor supports, if any, have you received in dealing with problematic students that are disruptive to the learning environment in your classroom?

9. What are some examples of mentor support that you received in regard to taking instructional risks as it relates to the curriculum in the classroom?

10. How can mentors support beginning teachers working in this urban public school district?
Appendix B

List of Tables

Table 1
New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Overview of 2014 New Jersey Teacher Mentoring Regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A9B-8)

Table A The difference between mentoring and induction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentoring</th>
<th>Comprehensive Induction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on survival and support</td>
<td>Promotes career learning and professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relies on a single mentor, or shares a mentor with other teachers</td>
<td>Provides multiple support people and administration-district, &amp; state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treats mentoring as an isolated phrase</td>
<td>Treats induction as a part of a lifelong professional development design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited resources spent</td>
<td>Investment is an extensive, comprehensive, and sustained induction program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reacts to whatever arises</td>
<td>Acculturates a vision and aligns content to academic standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table B Interview Questions Aligned with Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do beginning teachers describe the mentoring support they received in their</td>
<td>1. Did your school’s administrative team or district offices provide you with professional development, or a mentor to assist you during your non-tenured years? If so, what did they provide?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current settings?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In what ways, if any, have mentoring programs and staff development workshops</td>
<td>2. Has professional development or the lack of, influenced you in being effectively knowledgeable of your district teachers’ observation model?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facilitated professional growth?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What professional development training would you like to see offered to beginning teachers who work in urban public school districts?</td>
<td>3. What professional development training would you like to see offered to beginning teachers who work in urban public school districts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. As a non-tenured teacher, do you feel that you received an adequate amount of</td>
<td>4. As a non-tenured teacher, do you feel that you received an adequate amount of support from your mentor? Why or why not? If so, how did your mentor support you? If not, what could your mentor have done?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support from your mentor? Why or why not? If so, how did your mentor support you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If not, what could your mentor have done?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Has mentor support or the lack of, influenced you to remain in this school district?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>How much mentor support for the formal observations and walk-throughs by the school’s administration or district office, did you receive prior to being evaluated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>What type of feedback have you received from your mentor after being evaluated? Please be specific.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>What mentor supports, if any, have you received in dealing with problematic students that are disruptive to the learning environment in your classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>What are some examples of mentor support that you received in regard to taking instructional risks as it relates to the curriculum in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>How can mentors support beginning teachers working in this urban public school district?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Presentation of the Data

Table C Participants’ Demographic/Descriptive Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race and Ethnicity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biracial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masters’</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors’</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table D Years of employment, and teaching experience in current district

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience (yrs.)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current District</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table E Professional Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades Taught</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PK–3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9–12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Subject Taught
English 3 20%
Social Studies 1 7%
Science 3 20%
All Subjects 6 40%
Other 2 13%

Table F

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective Mentor &amp; PD</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective Mentor &amp; PD</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table G

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No, not effectively</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, effectively</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially effective</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table H

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current technology workshops</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management strategies</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and emotional needs of the students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I received an adequate amount</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, I did not receive an adequate amount</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table J

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, influenced to remain in the district</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not, influenced to remain in the district</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table K**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient, support received prior to evaluation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient supported prior to evaluation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table L**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General comments</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessment/self-evaluation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructive criticism</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table M**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management strategies</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No mentor support w/problematic students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table N**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tweaking the curriculum</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizing secondary resources</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table O**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal peer observations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-planning/common planning time</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor program lasts longer than one year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
January 10, 2017

Ronnie Estrick

Dear Mr. Estrick,

The IRB is in receipt of the application for your research entitled “Perceptions: Are Mandatory Mentoring Programs Contributing to Beginning Teachers’ Retention in Urban Public School Settings in Northern New Jersey?”

Your Application does not fall under the purview of the IRB, not even in exempt status, because your proposed case study analysis and evaluation of the mandatory mentoring program in the public school district only is not generalizable research as defined by the federal regulations.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.
Professor
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Anthony Colella
Appendix D
Letter of Solicitation for Beginning Teachers

Dear Beginning Teacher,

My name is Ronnie Estrict, and I am a doctoral student currently enrolled at Seton Hall University, in the Executive Educational Administration Doctoral Program. I am conducting interviews as part of my research study to increase our understanding of; “Perceptions: Are Mandatory Mentoring Programs Contributing to Beginning Teachers’ Retention in Urban Public School Settings in Northern New Jersey?” As a beginning teacher, you are an ideal candidate to give valuable first-hand information from your own perspective.

This interview will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. I am simply trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives on being a beginning teacher in this urban public school setting. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interview will be assigned a participant letter and number only –A1, A2, A3 and so on, will identify you. Data will not be stored electronically on hard drives of laptops, or desktop computers. If stored electronically it will only be stored on a USB key, or CD. Data will be secured in a locked file cabinet for five years and then destroyed.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to my research and findings could lead to greater public understanding of; “Perceptions: Are Mandatory Mentoring Programs Contributing to Beginning Teachers’ Retention in Urban Public School Settings in Northern New Jersey?”

If you are willing to participate please suggest a day and time that suits you and I will do my best to be available. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. I can be contacted via email at restrictedshu2014@gmail.com for an initial response. We can finalize a day and time via a telephone call to conduct the interviews in person.

Sincerely,

Ronnie Estrict
Appendix E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study, which will take place from December 1, 2017 to March 15, 2018. This form details the purpose of this study, a description of the involvement required and your rights as a participant.

1. The Researcher:
   - My name is Ronnie Estrick, and I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University, enrolled in the E.D., Executive Educational Leadership Cohort 16 Program. I am conducting a qualitative research study on mandatory mentoring programs for beginning teachers.

2. The purpose of this study is:
   - The purpose of this study is to explore the impact, if any of mandatory mentoring programs contributing to beginning teachers’ retention in urban public school settings in Northern New Jersey? The perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the mentoring programs will be investigated by interviewing full-time employed beginning teachers.

3. The benefits of the research will be:
   - For administrators, beginning teachers, district office supervisors, and other stakeholders seeking to understand the challenges perceived by beginning teachers that participates in mentoring programs on the secondary level in urban public school settings. By exploring these perceptions and gaining a wider understanding of the impact on mentoring programs, principals and policymakers can implement supportive programs to assist these beginning teachers during their non-tenured years.

4. The methods that will be used to meet this purpose include:
   - The beginning teachers will participate in a semi-structured interview lasting 45 minutes each to provide insight into their experiences, participation in mentoring programs, and their view of the teaching profession as they continue to work in an urban public settings with high teacher turnover.
5. Study Instrument:

- Data will be collected during the semi-structured interview process from questions crafted by this researcher, and reviewed by a jury of experts. The interview questions on the questionnaire regarding support and staff development workshops that beginning teachers have received, from participating in mentoring programs for facilitating professional growth.

6. Voluntary Nature of the Project:

- Participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

7. Anonymity:

- I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.

8. Security of Stored Data:

- Data will be stored electronically on a USB drive. Data will be secured in a locked file cabinet for three years and then destroyed.

9. Risk:

- This study poses no risk to any participants. I will do my best to ensure that confidentiality is maintained by not citing your actual name within the actual study. You may choose to leave the study at any time.

10. Remuneration:

- There are no financial gains of any kind by participating in this study.

11. Contact Information:

- Ronnie Estrict, Seton Hall University, 400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, NJ 07079: restricteidshu2014@gmail.com
• Faculty Adviser: Dr. Anthony Colella, Seton Hall University, 400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, NJ 07079.

12. **Permission to use audio and I-phone recorder:**

• The interviews will last approximately 45 minutes long and will be recorded on an I-phone; however, your name will not be recorded. Your name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of research. The audio recording will be transcribed and stored onto an USB drive. You have the right to review any portion of the audio recording and request to have it destroyed. All data will be destroyed after three years.

13. **Acknowledgement of Informed Consent Form:**

• I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study by signing this Informed Consent Agreement.

_________________________________________  _______________________
Print Name                                      Date

_________________________________________
Signature