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# An Analysis of a Mentoring Program in a Northern New Jersey School District

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An Analysis of a Mentoring Program in a Northern New Jersey School District

by

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## APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

**Marta Yafar-Werman** has successfully defended and made the required modifications

to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D.** during this **Summer Semester 2019**.

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ABSTRACT

This case study examined a mentoring program in a northern New Jersey town, where experienced teachers helped novice teachers succeed in their careers. The aim of the study was to answer the following questions: What are teachers' perceptions of mentoring programs on their development as educators? What are teachers' perceptions of the ability of mentoring to shape their decision to remain in the profession?

Each one of the articles cited in this study, whether the mentoring program took place in Macedonia, Pakistan, Israel, or the United States of America, agreed that the mentoring of novice teachers contributes to professional development as well as student outcomes.

The case study was conducted with a qualitative approach using both a focus group and individual interviews. All of the participants in the mentoring program held regular group meetings. The researcher participated in several of these meetings and used this as her focus group. Everyone involved with the mentoring program, including its administrators, received invitations to participate in the study.

The data show that the mentoring program in place was a professional development opportunity for mentees and mentors and it helped them evolve as professional educators. The data was inconclusive on the impact the program has on teacher retention.

According to the data collected, the state reduction of funds to this researcher's subject district will affect the availability of resources and opportunities. Teachers, mentors, and mentees may not find the same resources available to them next year.

Novice teachers from the northern New Jersey district were committed to working hard and to responding to the demands imposed on them. Especially with the guidance of their mentors who were equally committed to facilitate and guide their mentees. This is all

meaningless without an administration that nurtures eager mentors willing to support their

mentees. The program in place was not flawless, but it was effective and collaborative.

Potentially it had all of the elements to become flawless.

DEDICATION

To my husband Bruce and my children Marci and Shawn

And to the memory of my dearest Nono and Nona, who, as grandparents, meant the world to me

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Many districts find that once they hire novice teachers and make them part of their

organization; it is hard to keep the novice teachers motivated and engaged in the process of

teaching (Burgess, 2012; DuFour & Mattos, 2013). The district's job is to ensure that once they

hire teachers they provide them with the necessary materials to succeed in the classroom (Hoy &

Forsythe, 1986).

Necessary materials include computers, curriculum materials, school expectations, chalk,

and if the district has enough money, smart boards, document cameras, and functioning air

conditioning. However, one of the most important materials a district can provide any new

teacher is knowledge: knowledge of how the system works, and the teacher's accountability to

the district. The district must have a clear understanding that teaching has changed. It has

become more challenging because of the demands the state has for teachers in general (Clark,

2012). Besides, the student population has changed dramatically and is more diverse than ever.

Research shows that a school's outcome (student proficiency scores) depends highly on

what teachers do or do not do in the classroom (Goh, Yusuf, & Wong, 2017; Skinner, Zimmer-

Gembeck, & Connell, 1998). These challenges are very difficult not only for novice teachers but

also for more experienced teachers. If these challenges present difficulties for experienced

teachers, then challenges such as time management, paperwork, and classroom discipline are

overwhelming for novice teachers (Jonson, 2002). Furthermore, research shows that the

aforementioned reasons are why so many new teachers are leaving teaching and starting other

types of careers.

Most studies on novice teachers' experiences show that this has been considered the most difficult time in a teacher's career (Gavish & Friedman, 2010). In fact, "Some of them feel that this is a 'sink or swim' type of situation" (Lawson, 1992; Lortie, 1975), "baptism of fire" or "trial of fire experiences" (Hall, 1982; Pataniczek & Isaacson, 1981).Johnson (1986) wrote an article that noted, "Promising young teachers are leaving the teaching profession after a year or two because they've been exposed to the most negative aspects of schools without having had a chance to work with the positive." McCann and Johannessen (2004) clarified the way novice teachers feel when reflecting on their lives as teachers. The study went on to say that novice teachers experience many sleepless nights, leading to mornings filled with anxiety and desperation, which no teacher should ever have to feel.

All of the problems that novice teachers face appear to diminish when they receive some type of assistance. For instance, literature has shown that districts that have implemented mentoring systems for novice teachers in their schools have successfully created a positive atmosphere in their schools. The results have also shown that districts were able to retain new teachers and improve their skills and competence (Washburn-Moses, 2010).

The present study explored whether novice teachers who were mentored could not only manage the pressure mentioned above but could also maintain more enthusiasm and motivation than those who did not receive some type of mentoring. Further, this study examined whether those who did experience the mentoring process felt that they had received more support and training, especially when it came to tackling and enduring long observations and scrutiny. Teachers who received quality mentoring were likely to remain in the teaching profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

This case study examined a mentoring program in a northern New Jersey town, where experienced teachers helped novice teachers succeed in their teaching careers. This mentoring program was created to help bridge the gap between novice and experienced teachers in the district. Novice teachers acquired all the skills necessary from the mentoring program to satisfy the demands of the district and the state. Furthermore, this program consisted of enrolling a group of experienced teachers to mentor new ones. The mentoring included one-on-one meetings, colleague-to-colleague observations (informal), and discussions with extensive feedback. The program also held professional development workshops where all new teachers (mentees) together with their respective mentors (district-wide) met in a group setting to discuss issues, questions, and so forth.

## Research Questions

RQ 1   What are teachers' perceptions of mentoring programs on their development as educators?

RQ 2   What are teachers' perceptions of the ability of mentoring to shape their decision to remain in the profession?

## Research Plan and Methods of Data Collection

This case study provided a means of understanding the perceived influence of the mentoring program. The study looked at the perceptions of mentors who chose to be a part of the program, and the perceptions of novice teachers who were assigned to the program regarding the influence of the mentor–mentee relationship. This research used a qualitative approach.

This study was qualitative using a case study design because it was suited to examining the individual beliefs and perceptions of participants in a mentoring program. For the study, an interview format was selected due to the depth of data it could offer and its ability to identify

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participants' perceptions and experiences about the topic. Some of the questions that were developed during the literature review could have been answered using a quantitative approach. However, this researcher only used a qualitative approach. Because this researcher was interested in exploring perceptions about the mentoring program to determine teacher retention and teacher development a purposive sample of highly involved and competent individuals within the school district were selected. Highly involved and competent individuals are those who are frequently researching and studying better practices and approaches to education and students' learning. They are the ones highly regarded by administration, students, parents, and peers because of their dedication and work ethic.

For the study, 15 interviews were conducted with mentors, 15 interviews with novice teachers, and five with administrators. Interviews with participants took the form of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, which allowed for further questioning when necessary. The interview protocol was developed after conducting an extensive literature review; questions were based on the literature review and preliminary information garnered from the focus groups. Each interview lasted approximately half an hour and took place in the school setting. This process took place with administrators, mentors, and novice teachers. The interviewees were asked to discuss their perceptions of the district's mentoring program, its benefits (if any), whether they felt it had an influence on novice teachers and their growth as educators, and whether the influence was positive or negative. Additionally, the interviewees were asked about their perception of whether the program helped the novice teachers decide that education was truly their desired field and if the mentoring program helped in navigating all of the obstacles faced by the novice teacher.

This researcher developed the interview questions and conducted the interviews. The interviewer took notes during the interview, and participants were informed that the interview would be voice recorded. Interviews were confidential to ensure transparency and fidelity of responses.

## Data Analysis Plan

The information on tape recordings (smartphone or a recording device) was transcribed and coded. Written notes were also coded and analyzed. For instance, the positive answers were coded as such (positive regarding their feelings and perceptions about teacher mentoring) and then put into categories. The same happened with the negative perceptions and or answers (negative regarding their feelings and perceptions about teacher mentoring).This process occurred immediately following each interview to ensure accuracy and to understand the data. Data were gathered and grouped into categories that related to the research questions. Categories were named and clustered. Categories were responsive to the purpose of identifying perceptions of the novice teacher's effectiveness. Once relevant and important information was found, it was coded with descriptive words or numbers. It was helpful to develop a plan where all of the codes were gathered and explained in the study. First, codes were identified. Codes are the "chunks" or "segments" that hold a particular meaning. Next, categories were developed to group codes according to an interpreted relationship among the codes. For instance, the answers related to the strategies teachers gained through mentoring were "chunked" and then put into categories.

Triangulation of data sources from mentors and mentees were used to ensure trustworthiness.

Data were analyzed by teachers who were familiar with the mentoring process. The interviews were conducted in all six of the schools where mentees and mentors were located, which was within the northern New Jersey School District.

The transcriptions of the interviews were reviewed with each interviewee to ensure accuracy. During this review, all personally identifiable data were removed from the transcript. Transcribed data were then carefully read and divided into meaningful analytical units that were developed by examining the data. These analytical units (coded data) were analyzed by applying a qualitative data analysis. A plan was developed where all of the codes were gathered and explained in the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The mentoring of novice teachers is not a new concept. Moreover, in the state of New Jersey mentoring is part of the teacher's certification process. New teachers are supposed to have gone through a minimum of 30 weeks of mentoring to be able to receive their standard certificate. This literature review analyzed the way many districts in the United States and some countries approach and implement mentoring programs.

In a study about peer mentoring, Tollefson-Hall (2015) mentioned that, according to Piaget's theory, people learn as they encounter a challenge which they have no prior experience in resolving; "they either refuse to accept the differences in the conceptual framework or try to make sense of the new situation" This theory is experienced daily in every classroom in the world. Novice teachers are often put in front of the classroom with little help and expected to find a solution to whatever problem arises. One of the strategies that has been implemented is mentoring novice teachers, not only to improve the quality of teaching children receive but also to help with the retention of teachers by providing critical support for novice teachers.

**Readings**

**Novice Teacher Learning Communities: An Alternative to One-On-One Mentoring**

Meyer (2002) argued that the school community could help make or break a novice teacher. In fact, his article claimed that this determined whether teachers stayed as teachers or sought a different profession. Additionally, Meyer discussed that many novice teachers were normally part of some sort of program where a mentor was matched with a mentee. Even though this type of arrangement could be helpful, novice teachers could benefit even more if they were

part of a learning community where teachers gathered voluntarily to learn about teaching and learning (Meyer, 2002). This study took place in northern California.

In this study, Meyer (2002) wrote about how novice teachers' decisions to remain as teachers depended on the actions the administration took to create inclusive programs between veteran and new teachers. Many articles have supported Meyer's beliefs that novice teachers' success directly related to their school community's engagement.

The present study explored Meyer's points, compared them to this subject case study, and answered the following questions:

- What are teachers' perceptions of mentoring programs on their development as educators?

- What are teachers' perceptions of the ability of mentoring to shape their decision to remain in the profession?

Meyer (2002) conducted his study using a qualitative approach to be able to understand novice teachers' experiences in a learning community. The design included ethnographic methods of participant observation, direct observation, interview, and document collection (Yin, 1994). He documented each of the 50 meetings he participated in over a 4-year period. This involved audiotaping and writing field notes, conceptual memos, and selective transcriptions. This researcher did not agree with the length of time used for Meyer's study because so many factors were susceptible to regular change. A 4-year period seemed too long to observe, counsel, and guide a novice teacher. After 4 years, they can hardly be called "novice teachers." Meyer's first interview took place after the teachers completed their second year of teaching, and the second interview took place after the third year of teaching. This researcher's observation was that interviews should have occurred during the first year, not after, which is the most crucial

time for a new teacher. The impressions from the first year are more valuable than the novice teacher's recollections from a year or two later.

Meyer (2002) ascertained that, even though the program was not identified as mentoring, it was indeed a mentoring program. However, many of the participants felt that the program was inadequate and lengthy. Participants felt isolated and did not know who to go to for help when they needed it.

Meyer's (2002) study gave the researcher insightful observations about how participants felt at the beginning of their careers and after a year or two. Meyer's study served as a guide for investigating the mentoring process in the subject district and whether it influenced teacher retention. Meyer's work was a useful example to use as a parallel to what was happening in northern New Jersey schools, especially when discussing novice teachers' feelings of isolation at the beginning of their careers. The main difference in this research is that it focused on the novice teachers' first year of teaching as opposed to their first 4 years.

**Mentoring in Teaching Profession**

In Macedonia, the government has agreed that, for children to have access to the best education possible, they must start with great teachers. In Macedonia, Petrovska, Sivevska, Popeska, and Runcheva (2018) wrote an article called "Mentoring in Teaching Profession." They claimed that teachers must be trained to become effective teachers. Mentoring is a strategy used worldwide to help teachers help students. Their article featured different aspects of the mentoring process. Even though the article's scenario took place in the Republic of Macedonia, many parallels and similarities can be seen with the way mentoring works in many school districts in the United States. For teachers to become mentors, they had to have a minimum of 5 years of teaching experience, and the mentor title was awarded by the principal of the school. In the

present study, which involved NJ schools, principals also selected mentors, and it was preferable that they had7 to 8 years of teaching experience.

Petrovska et al.'s (2018) article presented three questions:

1. Are there differences in teachers' views and opinions for the mentoring process regarding their work experience?

2. Does mentoring as a process contribute to/for teachers' professional development?

3. Are there differences in teachers' views and opinions for the mentoring process regarding their experience and involvement in the process of mentoring novice teachers?

The article clearly described how mentoring worked in Macedonia and cited the importance it had historically in the educational field. The relationship between mentor and mentee was one of respect and mutual understanding and benefit. Even the school community claimed benefits because mentors and mentees became experts who shared their knowledge with students. The researchers decided to perform a quantitative study to conduct their research. They used a survey questionnaire to gather data to be able to answer their questions. The researchers used an analysis of variance (ANOVA), one main effect at two or more levels) as the statistical test for their study.

The following is some of the information included in Petrovska et al.'s (2018) survey:

- The sample consisted of 398 teachers from primary and subject teachers. Around 75% were female teachers, and 25% were male. Forty percent of the participants were mentors at one point or another.

- Regarding mentoring novice teachers and students, future teachers contributed to the professional development of the teachers. The $p$ value was .004, which is less than .05. This means that the null hypothesis was rejected because mentoring novice

teachers did contribute to the teachers' professional development. There was a true influence; that is, it did not occur by chance alone. This finding was very significant.

- The participants reported their views of the way the mentoring process of the novice teachers was realized in their school and how it contributed to the mentors' professional development. The $p$ value was .01, which was less than .05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, meaning that, according to the respondents, the way the mentoring process was realized did contribute to the mentor teachers' professional development. There was a true influence that did not occur by chance alone. This finding was very significant.

- Another variable was that mentor teachers should be specially trained for mentoring.

- One conclusion from the study was that potential teachers should spend the apprenticeship in the same classroom with their mentors.

- Another conclusion was that the school, apart from mentoring, should offer other forms of special support to novice teachers.

- The participants reported that the principal's preference was the criterion for choosing the mentors for the novice teachers.

The findings showed that most of the scores were statistically significant at the .05 level, which means that the results rejected the null hypothesis that none of the variables had an influence in the mentoring of novice teachers.

The study recommended continuing with mentoring and considering other forms of support for novice teachers, including adding a financial aspect. The authors were mindful of the need to have better support for teachers by analyzing the situation of mentoring in Macedonia and trying to identify ways to improve the program by answering their research questions. The

authors wrote that schools worldwide must rely on senior teachers' willingness to offer their expertise for a mentoring program to be successful. Some countries have created a financial incentive for additional duties as a mentor, whereas other places offer additional credit for holding this qualification (Petrovska et al., 2018).

It was possible to use similar tests when analyzing the data for this study and trying to answer the research questions:

RQ 1   What are teachers' perceptions of mentoring programs on their development as educators?

RQ 2   What are teachers' perceptions of the ability of mentoring to shape their decision to remain in the profession?

**Impact of Mentoring on Teachers' Professional Development: Mentees' Perceptions**

This article was written by Manzar-Abbass, Malik, Khurshid, and Ahmad (2017); the study took place in Pakistan. The article studied the impact of mentoring on primary school teachers' professional development, as well as, male and female teachers' perceptions of mentoring. Teachers have a responsibility to continue their professional development to ensure that their knowledge is current, especially because, according to the article, having better-prepared teachers results in better student-achievement outcomes. In short, therefore, mentoring teachers has a strong impact on students' achievement.

The government of Pakistan decided to adopt a very important initiative to improve teacher efficacy. This initiative involved experienced and highly regarded teachers who were already in the workforce and mentoring novice teachers. The government organized professional development in all of their districts in Punjab by assigning in-service professional development, specifically for first-time teachers. This in-service professional development included follow-up

support for teachers in the classroom, mentoring, accountability, incentives, and teacher development (Akhlaq, Iqbal, Jumani, & Chishti, 2015).

To carry out the professional development, the organizers divided the districts into subunits, where groups of 25–30 primary schools were brought together for trainings. The main goals of the in-service professional development were to help and support primary school teachers based on their needs.

The study was quantitative. They collected information via surveys, and the data analysis used a Likert Scale. This is a scale, which normally has options from one to five to indicate how much the respondents agree or disagree with a particular statement, with five representing the strongest agreement. The objectives of the study were to discover

- The mentee's perceptions about the impact of mentoring on their professional development.

- The differences between males and females' perceptions about the impact of mentoring on their professional development. (Manzar-Abbass et al., 2017)

The study was looking to disprove the null hypothesis that there was no significant difference between the perceptions of male and female mentees about the impact of mentoring on their professional development.

The following indicators were used in the study: pre-instruction indicators consisting of three variables (keeping a teacher's diary, assigning and checking homework, and following parameters of assignments), during-instruction indicators consisting of four variables (student learning objectives, activity-based teaching and learning, audiovisual aids, and students' assessments), and post-instruction indicators consisting of three variables (adherence to lesson plans, students' interaction, and classroom management). Of these indicators, only one (keeping

a teacher's diary) was significant, at the .000 level. The rest was not significant, which means that the null hypothesis was not rejected.

One observation about the variables used in the study was that not all of them seemed relevant to mentoring teachers and appeared more applicable to teaching strategies, which was not necessary to include. However, the study did show the importance of providing primary school teachers with the best opportunities for professional development as it benefited students' educational outcomes. In addition, the study indicated that the mentors (senior teachers) were not being given the tools necessary to help their mentees (novice teachers).

**Collegial Support and Novice Teachers' Perceptions**

Novice teachers face challenges in understanding the local community, school policies, and school practices. Beginning teachers' school-based social networks, such as assigned mentors and other colleagues, can be a potential source of local knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge for beginning teachers. Therefore, the interactions between novice teachers and senior colleagues play a key role in novice teachers' growth and, thus, student learning.

Pogodzinski (2013) wrote a study titled "Collegial Support and Novice Teachers' Perceptions of Working Conditions." This study dealt with and described the impact of support from colleagues on new teachers. His study examined variations in perceptions of working conditions related to workload and access to resources. He further identified the association between these perceptions and the quality of support the novices received from their formal mentors and other colleagues. He discussed the fact that many new teachers chose the school where they wanted to work, normally a school with a good reputation and good pay. The schools with less favorable reputations were selected last, if at all. This created a problem for school administrators who needed to staff their school but not many new teachers want to join them.

When new teachers find a place they want to work, they rely on informal resource acquisition rather than formal resources: professional development, workshops, and so forth.

Pogodzinski (2013) collected data by using a survey. The data were gathered from novice teachers at the elementary- and middle-school levels, six in Michigan and five in Indiana. He selected these districts because of the midsize population and because of the proximity to the researcher. The study examined variations in perceptions of working conditions related to workload and access to resources and further identified the association between these perceptions and the quality of support the novices received from their formal mentors and other colleagues. Pogodzinski (2013) discovered that the influence that mentors had over their mentees was very positive because they felt they coped with their everyday schedules and challenges in a more professional manner.

However, Pogodzinski (2013) could not prove if the new teachers' perceptions about the administrative climate were any different from the veteran teachers. New teachers' points of view about working conditions can vary significantly from that of experienced teachers. It appears that the author of this study came up with more questions than answers in his study.

This particular point about perceptions regarding their working conditions between novice teachers and veteran teachers most likely varied because veteran teachers normally have accrued some type of negative views about the system, and new teachers have not developed those feelings yet.

**Mentoring Novice Teachers: Motives, Process, and Outcomes From the Mentor's Point of View**

The study was about the impact that mentors had on their mentees and analyzed the mentor's point of view. It was conducted by Iancu-Haddad from Ben Gurion University, Israel, and Oplatka from Tel-Aviv University, Israel (2009). The research took place in Tel Aviv, Israel.

The paper cited major motives for senior teachers wanting to be involved in the mentoring of novice teachers. The authors commented that very little literature about mentoring from the mentor's perspective was available, hence the reason for the study. In fact, the focus was on the mentors' points of view and what drove them to be mentors.

The authors described the situation in Israel and mentioned that, in the early 1980s, teacher attrition was high, with many young new teachers deciding to move to different schools or changing career paths completely. Therefore, the state of Israel implemented a mentoring system that would support new teachers from the very first day. This study focused on mentors to first-year teachers. In their first year, teachers were assigned a mentor who had the required qualifications and was in good standing. It appeared the mentors had an "inclusion type of arrangement" very similar to the arrangement student teachers have in the United States. Therefore, full-time teachers who were assigned as mentors were relieved from their teaching responsibilities. Other mentors were retirees, and at times, the school accepted a dual type of schedule: half the day teachers were mentors, and the other half they were in their classroom. The mentor's role was to guide the novice teacher and teach them how to teach. According to Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009), the mentor's task in the classroom was to advise his/her mentee in all areas of teaching, whether it was pedagogical or emotional. In fact, at times it may have been evaluative (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009). The study was qualitative. Qualitative methods were suited to the task of describing and understanding mentoring relationships. Patton (2002) maintained that an effective way to study educational programs was to gather detailed, descriptive information about what was occurring in the program. The data consisted of interview transcripts from semi-structured interviews, which allowed distinguishing the interviewees' subjective interpretations and perspectives regarding the researched phenomenon

(Patton, 2002). Thus, to further understand the mentor's point of view, questions were carefully selected that captured and described how the teacher educators experienced and understood the mentoring relationship: how they perceived them, how they described them, how they made sense of them, how they talked about them with others, and what they felt about them.

The researchers conducted semi structured interviews with 12 experienced teachers (10 females, two males). The teachers selected for the study were mentors participating in the Ben-Gurion University Teacher Training Program that supported novice teachers during their first year of teaching.

The researchers asked the following questions:

1. What are mentor teachers' motives in participating in a mentoring process?
2. What is the perceived contribution of the mentoring process to the mentor?
3. How do contextual determinants affect the mentoring experiences of mentors? (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009).

The findings were that the mentors wanted to give back to the community what they had received when they started out. Even though they had no time for their own work, they felt it was their duty.

Other mentors said that when they were starting out, they did not have a mentoring program in place, so they wanted to be part of something meaningful. In contrast, others said that they were giving back what they received when they were new teachers: nothing. Overall, in spite of the fears and risks of failing, most of them felt they wanted their new teachers to succeed, in part, because they were going to feel it was their success.

Even though this study was done in Israel, the mentors' feelings and perceptions were not much different from what teachers experience here in the United States. In fact, the researcher hoped to discuss mentors' perceptions in her study in northern New Jersey, and the Iancu-

Haddad and Oplatka (2009) study offered possibilities on the direction or approach that would be best taken.

### How Do Teacher Mentors Perceive Their Role, and Does It Matter?

Leshem (2013) conducted a study in Israel from the mentor's perspective. The author argued that the literature regarding the mentor's benefits was scarce; therefore, her study focused on answering the following questions: "How mentors perceive their role, what preparation they receive to serve as effective mentors, and what their professional needs are?" (Leshem, 2013) These were all interesting points being analyzed by Leshem. The study was conducted with two groups: one with experience and training, and the other with no training or experience. The questions addressed how mentors perceived their role: "What preparation they receive to serve as effective mentors, and what are their professional needs?" (Leshem, 2013)

There were two perspectives. One where the mentees thought that the mentors were like parent figures, counselors, and so forth, and they felt that the mentors had done a lot for them. The other was that the mentors felt unappreciated, underprepared to serve in the mentor role, that there was no time to do their own work, that they had no identity, and that they could not define their role.

The implications derived from the study might have enhanced understanding of how mentors perceive the mentoring role and provided teacher-education stakeholders with tools to support mentors and to improve professional practices. The study might have helped understand why teachers who were mentors were not sufficiently recognized in this professional role. Leshem's study was qualitative within the inductive interpretative paradigm, "meaning that categories emerge out of the data rather than specifying them in advance of the research" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). This approach helped to investigate the identity and role of mentors.

The researcher decided to conduct two open-ended questionnaires that were distributed to mentors. One set of questionnaires, for mentors on the professional development course, was distributed during a session at the *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, at the end of the second year of the course in 2012. Participants had half an hour to complete the questionnaire. To create an open, nonthreatening atmosphere, the instructor was not present when the participants answered the questionnaire. The other set of questionnaires, for those not participating in the course, was distributed electronically to mentors who were members of the Professional Development Schools (PDS) partnership (Leshem, 2013).

Results from the study relating to the question of how mentors perceive the role of mentoring varied by the group the respondent belonged to. The answers from the group that participated in the professional development course, Group A, put more emphasis on interpersonal relationships. Their answers included themes such as increasing students' confidence, providing emotional support, listening to mentees, and being there to advise them.

The group not completing the professional development course, Group B, emphasized professional experience pertaining to skills such as helping with lesson planning, learning about teaching tools, being a role model, and socializing into school culture. Both groups were asked by their principals to be part of the study. Their answers varied. For the question on professional identity, 10 out of 13 mentors from Group B responded that training was not necessary to be a mentor.

Mentors from Group A expressed criticism about the content and structure of their course, yet 13 of the 15 mentors wrote that the enhancement courses were necessary to become a "professional mentor" (Leshem, 2013). The reason for their answer was that teaching experience

did not mean that one would be an exceptional mentor. Mentoring takes a new set of skills that are acquired with guidance.

For Group A, on the questions of professional support and needs, three topics arose: exposure to field experience, gaining interpersonal skills, and space for sharing experiences and dilemmas. All of them agreed that the professional development course did not give them the necessary tools they needed to be in the field helping mentees. The one main point they all made was that, when the professional development organizers decided to bring in mentees from other schools to talk about their experiences, they realized the importance of being mentors.

Answering the question about how the, status of a mentor was perceived in the school context, all mentors, in both groups, wrote that the school welcomed both student and novice teachers.

The author concluded her study by saying, "Further research is needed in the area of how to develop mentors' self-efficacy and enhance their professional identity as a stepping stone to improving the status of the mentor in the educational system" (Leshem, 2013).

The present study explored, in the subject school district, the perceived influence of a mentoring program on both mentors and novice teachers who were a part of the mentoring program. Therefore, the study examined the mentor's role just like the authors of the Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009) and Leshem (2013) studies.

## Chapter Summary

One of the more complex processes in the teaching profession is learning to teach (Darling-Hammond, Newton, & Wei, 2013). This is the reason why so many researchers are tackling the task of studying ways to ease novice teachers into the field. One of the primary

topics that many researchers have agreed to study is the efficacy of novice teacher mentoring programs in schools.

Countless theories have tried to explain how to become a good teacher, but in reality, theory does not help once novice teachers are in front of a class with 25 students looking at them and they are unable to say a word.

School districts have created mentoring programs by recruiting veteran teachers who have experienced the same challenges as new teachers are experiencing. The veteran teachers are called mentors.

The authors of all the articles cited as resources for this study, regardless of whether their study's mentoring program took place in Macedonia, Pakistan, Israel, or the United States, agreed that mentoring novice teachers contributed to professional development, as well as student outcomes.

The literature presented has served as a stepping-stone to answering the questions proposed in this study of a northern New Jersey school district:

RQ 1   What are teachers' perceptions of mentoring programs on their development as educators?

RQ 2   What are teachers' perceptions of the ability of mentoring to shape their decision to remain in the profession?

CHAPTER III

METHOD

According to the literature presented in chapter 2, mentoring of novice teachers has been a strategy used by many districts, not only in the United States but also worldwide, to diminish teachers' feelings of isolation and increase teachers' competency (Washburn-Moses, 2010).

Novice teachers must have a clear understanding that teaching has changed. It has become more challenging because of the demands the state has for teachers in general (Clark, 2012) and, the student population has been changing adding to novice teachers' frustration (Lawson 1992; Lortie 1975). Conversely, the problems that novice teachers face appear to diminish if there is some type of assistance provided for them. For instance, literature has shown that districts that have applied mentoring system, have successfully created a positive atmosphere in their schools. The results have also show that districts were able to retain new teachers, improve their skills, and their competences (Washburn-Moses, 2010).

This study attempted to show that novice teachers who were mentored, not only managed the pressures mentioned above but also, had more enthusiasm and were more motivated than those who did not receive any type of mentoring. Further, this study showed those who experienced the mentoring process felt that they had received more support and training. Especially when it came to tackling and enduring long periods of observations and scrutiny. Research has shown that teachers who have received quality mentoring are likely remain in the teaching profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

This study looked at a mentoring program in a northern New Jersey district, where teachers helped teachers succeed in their teaching careers. Seton Hall University's Institutional Review Board deferred approval of the study to the school district where the study was to be

conducted, and the school district approved the study (see Appendix A). The mentoring program had been created to help bridge the gap between new teachers and veteran teachers in the district. The program also enabled novice teachers to acquire all the skills necessary to satisfy the demands of both the district and the state. Furthermore, the program included enrolling a group of "experienced" teachers to mentor novice teachers. The mentoring included one-on-one meetings, informal observations, and discussions with extensive feedback. There were also professional development workshops where all of the novice teachers (mentees) together with their respective mentors (district-wide) met in a group setting to discuss issues, questions, etc.

## Research Questions

This study tried to answer the following questions:

RQ 1   What are teachers' perceptions of mentoring programs on their development as educators?

RQ 2   What are teachers' perceptions of the ability of mentoring to shape their decision to remain in the profession?

## Population

Forty-nine novice teachers and 49 teachers in the role of mentor who were invited to participate in meetings where focus group interviews or discussions took place. The hope was to answer questions about the perceived influence of mentoring programs on teacher development. The study took place in the northern New Jersey district with six schools: one high school; one middle school (with Grades 6 to 8); and four elementary schools (one with Grades 2 and 3, one with Grades 4 and 5, one with Kindergarten to first grade, and one that was pre-K only).

The participants were already part of the mentoring program in place in the study district. They were told about the study, which would take place and were invited to participate. The mentees and the mentors met the required criteria needed to answer the research questions.

## Sample/Subject Recruitment

This case study provided a means of understanding the mentoring program's perceived influence and impact. The study examined the perceptions of mentors and novice teachers who decided to participate in the program and what impact the program had. This research used a qualitative approach because it was suited for examining individual beliefs and perceptions of participants in a mentoring program. Originally, the study was going to use an interview format due to the depth of data it can offer and its ability to identify participants' perceptions and experiences about the topic. However, after further reading, a focus-group method was selected. Focus groups are generally used to collect data on a specific topic. (Focus group methods emerged in the 1940s, with Merton and Fiske's audience studies [Morgan, 1998].)

## Research Plan

Companies often use focus groups for marketing purposes. This study also used a focus group, which is a common qualitative research technique for an educational study in a school setting. A focus group typically consists of a small number of participants, usually around six to 12, from the same school or district, who share similar characteristics or common interests. Focus groups are a qualitative data-collection method, meaning that the data are descriptive and cannot be measured numerically.

Some of the questions that were developed during the literature review could have been answered using a quantitative approach; however, this study only used a qualitative approach. This was because the researcher was interested in exploring perceptions about the mentoring

program in these schools. A purposive sample of highly involved and competent individuals within the school district was selected to determine teacher retention and teacher development. Highly involved and competent individuals are those who are frequently researching and studying better practices and approaches to education and students' learning. They were highly regarded by the administration, students, parents, and peers because of their dedication and work ethic.

## Instrumentation and Data Collection

A focus group was used for collecting data. Focus groups are used in smaller groups and are generally used to collect data on a specific topic. Group meetings were arranged, which were already approved by the district, where discussions about the research questions were presented. In the first meeting, information was collected on the group of mentees and mentors to further develop a survey questionnaire, which allowed more specific information to be gathered, when necessary, to answer the research questions:

RQ 1   What are teachers' perceptions of mentoring programs on their development as educators?

RQ 2   What are teachers' perceptions of the ability of mentoring to shape their decision to remain in the profession?

Group interviews with participants took the form of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, which allowed for further questioning when necessary. The interview protocol was developed after finishing the literature review, and questions were based on current research. Each meeting lasted approximately half an hour and took place in the school setting. This process took place with administrators, mentors, and novice teachers. The participants were asked to talk about their perceptions of the mentoring program, its benefits, if any; whether they

felt it had an influence on novice teachers, and whether the influence was positive or negative. The participants who were mentors in the program were asked whether they felt the program influenced novice teachers' growth as educators, whether it helped novice teachers decide if education was truly their desired field, and if the mentoring program helped navigate the obstacles of being a novice teacher. A set of questions was developed, and an interview took place. The interviewer took notes during the interview, and participants were informed of the interview was to be voice recorded. Group interviews were confidential in an attempt to ensure transparent and honest responses.

## Data Analysis

The information on tape recordings was transcribed and coded. Written notes were also coded and analyzed. For instance, positive answers were coded as such (positive regarding their feelings and perceptions about teacher mentoring) and then categorized. The same happened with negative perceptions and/or answers (negative regarding their feelings and perceptions about teacher mentoring).This process occurred immediately following each interview to ensure accuracy and to make sense of the data. Data were gathered and grouped into categories related to the research questions. Categories were named and clustered. Categories were responsive to the purpose of identifying mentors' perceptions on teacher effectiveness. Once relevant and important information was found, it was coded with descriptive words. It was helpful to develop a plan where all of the codes were gathered and explained in the study. First, codes were identified. Codes are the "chunks" or "segments" that hold a particular meaning. Second, categories were developed, that is codes were grouped according to an interpreted relationship among the codes. For instance, the answers related to the different strategies teachers gained through mentoring were "chunked" and then put into categories.

The individuals who were involved in analyzing data were teachers who were familiar with the mentoring process. The interviews were conducted in all six of the schools where mentees and mentors are located in the northern New Jersey School District.

The data were put into a document and analyzed by applying a qualitative data analysis system and/or program. Transcribed data were carefully read and divided into meaningful analytical units that were developed by examining the data. Once relevant and important information was found, it was coded with descriptive words. It was helpful to develop a key that listed and explained all of the codes in the study.

## Chapter Summary

The researcher, as mentioned before, explored and researched a mentoring program in northern New Jersey and attempted to show whether this program helped to diminish the feelings of despair and isolation of novice teachers; and whether their perceptions of such a mentoring program helped them feel supported and that they could do their job. Literature has shown that most problems and negative feelings new mentees have are lessened when given some sort of assistance (Washburn-Moses, 2010). Moreover, it has also improved their skills and feeling of competence.

The study was conducted with a qualitative approach using focus groups and interviews. One large focus group was proposed, and all participants in the mentoring program were invited to participate. The invited teachers expressed a preference to conduct the focus groups or meetings in their respective schools. The participants were located in all six schools in the district. Although the distance from school to school was not significant, holding the meetings afterschool hours was a challenge for many. An alternate solution was to form sub meetings with fewer participants and to gather input for forming the questions to take place during interviews.

Meetings took place before and after the school day, as well as at lunchtime. Once the data were

collected via interviews with a recorder, the researcher transcribed the information, sifted

through it, and analyzed it for coding.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The findings relate only to the study conducted on mentoring in one district in northern New Jersey. The district was located in a rural setting with a population of about 25,000. The district has 3,600 students with one high school, two middle schools, and three elementary schools. The purpose of the study was to explore participants' perceptions of the mentoring program around two guiding questions:

RQ 1    What are teachers' perceptions of mentoring programs on their development as educators?

RQ 2    What are teachers' perceptions of the ability of mentoring to shape their decision to remain in the profession?

**Population, Participants, and District Efforts**

The study was completed by interviewing 19 participants: three administrators, eight mentors, and eight mentees. The mentees were either recent graduates from a traditional route college or were part of an alternate route program in the state of New Jersey. The participants in the study were located in all six schools within the subject district. The administration identified all of those who were enrolled in the district's mentoring program. An invitation email went to each of those enrolled—49 novice teachers and their mentors. An invitation letter was also sent to three administrators, and all three volunteered to be a part of the study. Acceptance to participate was less than originally expected. The district received significantly less state funding than previous years; therefore, many of the teachers approached to participate in the research were dismissed for the next academic year, and those affected by this loss chose not to participate in the study. Therefore, 19 people agreed to participate: eight, mentors, eight mentees,

and three administrators. The district selected had a comprehensive mentoring program in place with specific mentor and mentee expectations delineated, as well as a calendar of activities with specific events occurring monthly and mentors were expected to both support and facilitate mentee performance.

## Findings

The findings relate to themes that emerged both from the literature on mentoring and individual responses to the interview questions (see Appendices B and C for interview questions and responses). The themes that emerged from the literature were mentors' perceptions of their role, preparation, background, communication dynamics, and use of mentoring as a self-reflective tool and elements of confidentiality; mentees' perceptions of their initial experiences as a teacher and omissions in the mentoring experience; and administrators' comments (organizational recommendations) regarding unexpected observations of participants, benefits and values of a mentor–mentee relationship, and novice-teacher retention.

## Mentors' Perceptions

### The Mentors' Role

The first finding that emerged from the analysis was about the role of the mentor. Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009) conducted their study regarding mentors' perceptions in a mentoring program in Israel. They collected data by interviewing experienced mentors, and one of their questions was, "What is the perceived contribution of the mentoring process to the mentor?"

The response to this question was simply that there were benefits to the mentor's role. The benefits to the mentors were enhancing their self-esteem and being able to share their personal beliefs and values (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009; Tauer, 1998). Just as Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009) described in their study, the mentors in the northern New Jersey district felt

rewarded and privileged to have been asked to take on such a meaningful role. One of the mentors reported,

> I wanted to be a team member, someone they can go to, teach them about curriculum, and lesson planning. I wanted them to feel comfortable. I wanted them to be adequate and confident with themselves with the profession they chose. If they were not adequate, students were going to be the ones who suffered. (Participant 14)

Another mentor wondered, "Am I worthy of the opportunity given to me?" (Participant 2)

Another study, this one conducted in Israel, discussed the mentors' point of view and their role in mentoring programs. One outcome in that study was that mentors who did not have any mentoring experience felt they did not know how to handle their own teacher's schedule, adding to the mentor's responsibility (Leshem, 2013). They felt they could not do their job well, especially when it came to aiding a novice teacher emotionally and professionally (Leshem 2013). This researcher found in the data of the mentoring program in northern New Jersey that mentors knew what they wanted to do and accomplish with their mentees. Leshem cited the fact that, if mentors were prepared, they could share their excitement with their mentees (Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002; Leshem, 2013).A participant talked about her feelings, reflecting on how she felt at the beginning:

> I was excited, thrilled, vertigo. Getting in the class was everything I dreamed of. It was something I always wanted to do. Brought me back to 4ᵗʰ grade. My teacher was telling me someday I would make a great teacher. It was scary but I felt now is the chance to do what I always wanted to do. Be a teacher. Felt that this was my second chance. I would ask my mentees, "What do they want from me? I would give them the floor."(Participant 7)

The literature reviewed for the study featured some of the more effective ways to improve student outcomes and teachers' self-confidence. In addition, the literature identified a common strategy that districts worldwide implement. This strategy was mentoring novice teachers. Within the subject district, the mentoring program consisted of novice teachers being

assigned a mentor for a year. The mentor, ideally, was to be in the same school, with a

compatible schedule, and the same subject discipline as the mentee. One mentee said,

> It is important whom we pick as a mentor. Must be a collaborative person, effective or
> highly effective, willing to work with others, must be willing to pay it forward, dedicated.
> Someone who is reflective on her/his approaches. Someone who is willing to allow
> someone to visit her/his classroom, always offering ideas, completely versed in
> improving himself or herself. The program should not require a lengthy time of
> experience. (Participant 15)

**Mentors' Preparation**

The second finding that emerged from an analysis of my data was the preparation of

mentors. Leshem (2013) found that preparation could improve mentors' performance (Iancu-

Haddad & Oplatka, 2009), "suggesting that they may have greater success in impacting

professional growth and teacher enthusiasm" (Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002).Leshem continued

to say that, because there were no models in place for mentors to emulate, their work was mainly

intuitive (He, 2009). Leshem also said that all of the focus was on the novice teacher's personal

growth (Leshem, 2013; Lopez-Real & Kwan, 2005, as cited in Wenger, 1998).

The district in northern New Jersey where the present study took place continued to

provide opportunities for mentors to feel prepared and ready to share their knowledge with their

mentees. Teachers in the district had to fulfill a minimum of 20 hours of professional

development. The district provided the professional development; however, teachers could attend

out-of-district professional development opportunities as long as they initiated timely paperwork.

The district had implemented the use of a checklist, which was supposed to have been

shared before the beginning of classes. The idea was to have the mentors and mentees review

items on the checklist to make sure that they were complying with the district's rules. Some of

the items were related to preparation for the first day of classes, regular meetings with each

other, familiarity with school and districts' procedures, lesson planning, and more. I was given a

copy of the checklist (2018–2019 VTSD Mentoring Checklist—see Appendix D); however, neither the mentors nor the mentees were aware of its availability. Before classes began participants were supposed to have received a package of monthly checklists. At the time of the interviews, it became clear that not one of the mentors or mentees knew that the checklists existed. These checklists were supposed to be completed, signed, and returned for record keeping at the end of every month. Nevertheless, mentors met daily and, at times, more than once a day. Mentors tried to provide information as best as they could and time permitting. One of the mentors said, "I am lucky. We are next to each other, and we talk daily and get the chance to check in often. Therefore, I bring things up a lot about doc logs, Schoology." (Participant 6)

**Mentors' Background**

Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009) focused on the mentor's point of view just as Leshem did in 2013. Their approach analyzed the reasons a teacher would want to be a mentor. There were benefits to the role, as well as drawbacks. One of the benefits was that even experienced teachers could still learn and add to their knowledge. One of the drawbacks was the work added to their already hectic schedule. This researcher found in the data that the teachers who began their careers 20, 30 years ago wanted to share their views and knowledge, even though they did not experience a mentoring program themselves. They commented on their initial experiences as teachers because these experiences were so influential in their mentoring role. This researcher found in the data that participants in the role of mentor felt a lack of preparation, whether they were part of a mentoring program, or they began their careers a long time ago and the concept of a mentoring program was nonexistent (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009). The comments regarding the first day ranged from total panic to awful, mainly due to a total lack of information:

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"My first day was terrifying. I guess the mentors were set up prior to the first day of school. I do not remember having too much help. I do not remember knowing I was supposed to have help. It was awful. (Participant 6)

Participant 10 noted how her feelings overcame her when she realized how little she knew about the first day of classes and the setting in her classroom:

I think I cried. There was no mentoring program and I was a Special Education Teacher. I had autistic children in a preschool specialized class. I had no help at all—no materials, no toys, just good training before the school year started. It would have been wonderful to have a "buddy" system or something like that.

One participant opened up about thinking and wishing she could apologize to her second-grade students for totally getting everything wrong on the first day:

I did not know what I was signing up for. I wanted to quit after the end of the first day. I felt complete helplessness. I felt I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But I was in the right place. I just did not know what to do. There was no mentoring program in place, but I did know that I was going to get some type of help. I had a unique opportunity to work in the same district where I lived. So, I had an informal community rallying for me. It did not help me when I got in front of the second-grade class and the door was closed. I also knew there was a lot of pressure put on me as well as expectations. Some of the people in that community were teachers who understood the expectations. (Participant 16)

The following participant explained that, even though she did not experience a formal mentoring program, she did learn a great deal through informal mentoring:

As a teacher and mentee, I did not have a mentor or a mentoring program. That was 33 years ago. I student taught under someone extraordinary and prepared me in ways that nobody would believe me. She taught me about curriculum, etc. there was not a formal mentoring in place but without receiving monetary compensation she was willing to give me her time. It was an informal mentoring. I talked to other teachers who were physical education teachers and discussed different things to use in my classes. (Participant 17)

A mentor recalled the beginning of his career in a difficult district with no structured programs or curriculum, but he was able to rely on colleagues who were willing to help and fill in as informal mentors:

I am looking back 40 years. I was in Newark in the worst area possible. The issues at school were about drugs, weapons, etc. There was no mentoring program in the school.

No training whatsoever. In fact, in my first year of teaching, I was never observed. I was, however, lucky enough to find some help in coworkers (whom I still keep in touch).I reported to work the first day and I was handed a sign and told to go to the picket line. I did this for two days. On the third day, I had a new contract. (Participant 2)

Participant 6 was shocked when she entered her soon-to-be classroom and realized it was an empty room, just desks and chairs. Again, colleagues offering informal mentoring was the key to survival in those first few days:

I did not know if I was going to have some type of help or if I was supposed to buy my own materials. I asked myself, "Am I supposed to buy the rest of the furniture?" She said, "What am I doing with these kids?" I felt I did not have someone on my side telling me what to do. Entering into the room and finding just desks and chairs. . . . I felt I was winging it. My mentor said, "Come to me if you have any questions," but I did not know what questions to ask. Thankfully, I had two good teachers next to me who helped me out. (Participant 6)

## Mentoring as a Self-Reflective Tool

Leshem (2013) discussed in her study that mentors managed their tasks by intuition, rather than formal training via professional development sessions. She continued to explain that mentors needed to learn how to reflect on their own teaching to be able to guide their mentees (Leshem, 2012). This view coincided with a mentor's perspective in northern New Jersey: "It's a reflective tool that forces you to examine your ways. At the end of the year, that tool helps you improve some of the practices."(Participant 16)

The participating mentors reflected on their roles, and at the time of the interviews, they analyzed their strategies, meaning they questioned themselves about the right time to share important information. For instance, parents' contacts, immediate issues needing attention right away, how to deal with student issues, and when to complete certain paperwork. Mentors had to deal with immediate issues at hand, leaving the rest for a later time. Time and other constraints prevented them from reviewing materials, such as paperwork that they and their mentees needed to complete for their evaluation and year-end summative review.

Participant6 commented on missed opportunities,

> I wish I had pressed about classroom management and discussed with my mentee what to do and what not to do. It should have been sooner. At the beginning is the time to take care of behavior issues. It is ok not to be their friends. It should have been structured and in a routine. From the beginning, I should have set procedures early so he could follow them.

Participant2 reflected on his lack of mentorship when he was first starting in the profession. His experience was the reason he was determined to include strategies on how to deal with student issues:

> I wish someone had told me how to handle emotionally disturbed students. I had to learn everything as I went on my day. I learned on the job. It was trial and error. If I had any mentoring, it was an informal situation through coworkers. (Participant 2)

Participant 17 reflected on things she could have done differently: "As a mentor, I wish I had covered discipline issues much sooner. I was concentrating on positive things."

## Mentors' Communication Dynamics

In the teaching profession, communication with parents is paramount for student success at school. A participant claimed that her success as a teacher was in part because she made sure to introduce herself, before term start, to the parents of every child enrolled in her classes. She thought that she was able to avoid surprises by giving the parents access to her email and phone number. She insisted that her students respected her more because she had their parents' contacts readily available:

> As a mentor, which I love that role, I would ask [my mentees] what do they want from me? I would give them the floor. If it was awkward, I would have brought up what helped me as a teacher: dealing with parents. But dealing with parents, it was an important step to know how to do it. So, I would make sure I would encourage them to always call home. Lately, I have not had a mentee but I am in the panel of the mentoring program. (Participant 7)

## Elements of Confidentiality

One of the studies in the present literature review discussed the importance of the

principle of confidentiality:

> Throughout their cooperation, the mentor and the mentee should be guided by the
> following principles: confidentiality, availability, openness, optimism, efficiency, and
> respect. A good mentoring process is characterized by good planning, continuity,
> monitoring and feedback, reflexivity. The success of this process depends on the
> established relationship and collaboration between the mentee and the mentor. (Petrovska
> et al., 2018)

In the data collected, one participant felt so strong about confidentiality it was felt necessary to

include the topic in this paper. Confidentiality was not in place for Participant 7. As a mentee in

a different district, her mentor (who had at least 20 years of experience as a teacher) broke trust

by violating the implied confidentiality rule. The mentee felt betrayed. As a member of the

mentoring panel in the subject district, she insisted on making sure mentors respected

confidentiality. The participant said that, after 23 years in the teaching profession, she still

wished that her original district had implemented confidentiality between mentees and mentors:

"Confidentiality is the most important thing you can offer your mentee. Whatever they tell you.

Unless it is something dangerous. Nobody should know about what you know about the new

teacher" (Participant 7).Confidentiality, according to the literature presented, must be present in

a relationship between mentors and mentees.

## Mentees' Perceptions

Pogodzinski wrote a study in 2013 about collegial support for novice teachers. The article

dealt with the amount of work novice teachers endure during their first year. Pogodzinski cited

work by other scholars (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Flores, 2006; Horng, 2009; Johnson &

Birkeland, 2003; Kardos et al., 2001), who had attributed the conditions of stress, a sense of self-

efficacy, job satisfaction, and comfortability with their career decisions. The mentees in the subject district felt totally unprepared and lacked all kinds of information.

**Initial Experiences as a Teacher**

The participants in the role of mentee described their feelings during their initial experiences as novice teachers. Their feelings were not unusual considering that many of them had not been in their own classroom before (Meyer, 2002). It is important to note that the mentoring process, in general, had not begun by the first day of classes. Therefore, it was not unusual to feel as Participant 5 reported feeling: "I was overwhelmed to learn so many things like paperwork regarding my students, data collection, lots of paperwork, nerve-racking, etc." The information collected did show that last minute hiring could happen; however, this did not mean that the district could forfeit its responsibilities to provide adequate support for its teachers:

> The first day was nerve-racking. I was supposed to be at a different school. I was hired at the last minute. I only had one or two meetings with my mentor. I was thrown into it. It was very chaotic. I was working with someone I did not know. I believe I found out in the few days after classes started I was going to be part of a mentoring program and that a mentor was assigned to me. (Participant 3)

The following participant was part of the mentoring program but still felt neglected on the first day because the sessions with his mentors had not started:

> I really did not know what questions to ask. . . . I wish they would have given me more information on the amount of paperwork I had to complete by certain dates: for example doc logs* [Document logs]. I was surprised by the amount of work I had to do and research from my pile of papers, emails, etc. (Participant 4)

**Omissions in the Mentoring Experience**

> *The quality of mentoring support that novice teachers receive may directly impact their perceptions of their working conditions and their own work efforts.*

<div align="right">

—B. Pogodzinski, "Collegial Support . . ."

</div>

Even though the role of the mentor was to provide guidance from the beginning of classes, the mentees felt they were not receiving important information. The subject district provided the mentoring program with information that could be used as a framework. As explained to the researcher by two members of the mentoring panel, mentees and mentors were provided with a comprehensive checklist, which was supposed to be completed together (by mentors and mentees) at the end of every month. Nevertheless, important information seemed to have slipped through the cracks. Neither mentees nor mentors recalled ever seeing, let alone receiving, this checklist. The following participant felt she had no direction or support in beginning her career in a different state:

> In recalling my beginning days of teaching, which began thirty plus years ago, initially in New York and thereafter in the state of New Jersey, I can say a mentoring type of program was nonexistent. There was no supervisor to teachers or teacher-to-teacher mentorship that took place. In both teaching positions, I merely was led to books and supplies that existed; in addition, I was not given any direction as to what lessons had been previously implemented or used, and what type of material should be covered. In both positions, many of my lessons were created with ideas I had accumulated from college studies, or activities, which I had developed on my own. (Participant 19)

Most people do not know what they need until they are actually doing the job. The following participant realized she needed someone to show her how to present her lesson and she took the initiative and asked for help from her mentor. "As a mentee, I was not told about classroom management. I asked my mentor to come in and show me how to handle things in the classroom."(Participant 11)

Participant 4 realized that he did not have the answers he thought he had regarding lesson

planning, how much time to spend on a particular topic, and so forth:

> I hoped someone would give me advice and help me prioritize. How do I move on a regular day, how much time to spend on any subject? What works best for 4ᵗʰ grade? What kind of systems and procedures for this grade?

The perceptions and opinions of the following participant sounded frustrated and

overwhelmed:

> I'm new to teaching. So, all of the paperwork was overwhelming. Doc log [Document log], SGO's [Student Growth Objectives], PDP's [Professional Development Plans]. "I was always feeling I was behind. It was time-consuming. That was the most important thing to be addressed at the beginning, not at the end. But nobody told me how to go about it at the beginning. My mentor concentrated on the things I needed right away, like IEP's [Individual Education Plan] reading and so forth. Even though there were things I had done before, I was still in a panic. As a first-year, it would be nice if we get a list at the beginning of the year of things we need to do like PDP, doc logs, etc. Reading IEP direct, for special needs children needed to be addressed sooner. [Participant 4]

A different participant also wanted to know more about how to complete the doc logs, "The doc

log information, without a doubt—I wish they had mentioned the doc log at the beginning of

classes, not at the end. Now I have four months of material to sift through" (Participant 3).

Participant 1 confessed, "At the beginning, I did not know what questions to ask. I wish I would

have known what kind of materials were available to me."

Of all the participants, only one novice teacher was awarded a mentor in a different school

within the same district. Her area of expertise was unique and the only mentor available in her

field was in a different school:

> Unfortunately, my mentor is not in the same school. Therefore, that plays a difficult role because I cannot just run next door and ask a question that just came up. I knew I was going to have a mentor. She is in a different building. I did not know we would have to pay from our pockets. We did many of the meetings over the phone and FaceTime. (Participant 5)

The mentees felt they needed more time with their mentors, what they were getting was not enough. A mentee said he wished there were more common planning and more information on how to deal with parents.

> Definitely, things got better. As time went by, I felt more comfortable and less nervous. At the beginning, I did not know what questions to ask. Again, I would have liked to know how to deal with parents in a professional way without sounding harsh. I wish I would have known what kind of materials were available to me. (Participant 1)

It is considered that communication between teachers and parents, teachers and students, teachers and colleagues, and teachers and administrators is essential to survive in the educational field and, in particular, for mentees to survive in their newly elected profession. Effective communication fosters positive attitudes toward the job at hand, eliminates false or erroneous assumptions, and promotes a healthy relationship between all involved. The data showed that most omissions identified in this study were mainly due to a lack of effective communication.

### Administrators' Comments

It has been noted that a teacher's perceptions of the mentoring program had a lot to do with the school climate (Forsyth, Adams, & Hoy, 2015). "Additionally they (administrators) can foster a climate of collaboration across a school which encourages veteran teachers to offer support to novice teachers and communicates to novices that it is ok and expected that they seek assistance from their colleagues" (Pogodzinski, 2013). "Administrators play a significant role in influencing novice teachers' attitudes and behaviors regarding their work because they directly impact teachers' work assignments, access to resources, and evaluations" (Pogodzinski 2013).

Given that the administrators' perceptions were not included in the research questions, it was felt imperative to include these perceptions in the study because administrators set the tone within their schools and that it was an important factor in teachers' perceptions of the program.

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The district in northern New Jersey suffered drastic budget cuts from the state of New Jersey for the 2019–2020 school year. Those cuts affected the allocation of funds and resources and caused reallocations of teachers within the district. The administrators offered opinions about the mentoring program and hoped that funding cuts would not cause many changes to the program.

## Unexpected Observations from Participants

The opportunity to be part of a mentoring program, to comply with the requirements of the state, and to reaffirm what teachers learn in college or another program was humbling. If teachers were in a mentoring program in a school, it meant they had met all other eligibility requirements necessary to be hired. That alone was overwhelming. Teachers who had been in the profession for at least 10 years (the number of years depends on qualifications of teachers, it could be fewer) were given the chance to guide newly hired teachers. In addition, the intention of all involved was to make sure novice teachers did not succumb to the pressures imposed on them and could stand in front of a class and do what they did best—teach. The knowledge acquired while being mentored benefited the students. Even though the program was carefully planned, the data revealed some unexpected views and observations:

1. Not one of the mentors realized they had the choice to refuse the assignment.

2. Three mentees and one mentor agreed that the time for working together needed to be more frequent. Although five participants claimed to have met at least once per day, not only did these meetings need to be more frequent, but also they needed to be practical in nature. "In fact, it should not be a theoretical workshop, just time to work together" (Participant 16).

3. One administrator felt that new teachers, despite the demands imposed on them by either the district or state, must remember that the job was recession proof, where they could provide for their family while doing what they love, even during hard economic times. "They just can't jump in without being passionate about their jobs" (Participant 8).

4. The researcher was not made aware of the existence of any handbook for mentors and mentees. The handbook should have explained what the mentoring program was about, as well as the participants'' duties and responsibilities.

5. The researcher was made aware that mentees and mentors were supposed to attend a 2-day professional development workshop prior to the beginning of classes. Every new teacher was supposed to participate, except for those hired after the beginners' workshops took place.

6. A participant who was in the alternate route said the following about what had helped her but had not been suggested:

   Subbing helped me a great deal. It made me feel that I was confident, I could do this. This is possible. Classroom management was the main issue addressed while subbing. There is no better way of preparing than just doing it. It does build on that confidence. The most valuable information received was getting the information about IEPs [Individualized Education Programs]. (Participant 9)

As for advice to new teachers, she continued by saying, "If you can sub, please do it. Be in a classroom. It is a great experience. If you have 60 credits, get into a classroom. Being a substitute teacher is better preparation than student teaching" (Participant 9).

### The Benefits and Values of a Mentor–Mentee Relationship

Mentoring novice teachers is part of a mandate in the state of New Jersey to fulfill standard certification requirements. Teaching, in itself, is extremely demanding. These demands

are even more intense for first-year teachers. Mentoring programs are supposed to help with this

and provide novice teachers with certain benefits, if they manage to keep a positive attitude.

Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009) wrote that mentoring programs were an opportunity for

veteran teachers to nurture "a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of

promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development (Anderson & Shannon, 1988, p.

40)."

The data obtained from the participants described their feelings, beliefs, and

disappointments, but certainly, the following participants felt gratitude for what was being

offered:

> The program in place is very collaborative, applying differentiated practices and they work together to tackle issues in general. I was seven years in another district and it was not collaborative. It was not sufficient to manage the needs of a novice teacher, especially in classroom management. Common planning is not common in other districts. We are ahead of the curve here. In many places, it is a monthly gathering. In this district, it is a daily situation. . . . As far as professional development, it [mentoring] is essential. They can come to the meeting and ask how to implement a specific approach. So, it is a part of professional development. (Participant 18)

> The benefits of our mentoring program include the fact that it is district-wide. Furthermore, we have common planning time, which is a more consistent way to help the teachers. Our program is like a support group. It is very beneficial. (Participant 15)

> Having someone to go to if there is a question about assessment, keeping track of what they know (i.e., how to do charts). Having a mentor is very important. It is a great support system. In my other district, we were paired up with another new Spanish teacher. There was no structured or formal program. (Participant 11)

> At this time, I have the perfect opportunity. My mentee has the same schedule as me. We talk every day. The complete physical education department gets together to give her feedback. They all pitch in. How are the students reacting? We have the chance to go over the success of every lesson and reaction. We are constantly giving her suggestions. This is a good program. I just do not think that, as a group for mentoring, we meet often enough. There are not enough formal meetings. However, I have the best possible scenario. (Participant 14)

Participant 16 offered a valuable piece of information about self-reflection, explaining

that the existence of a mentoring program in the district was not only valuable but also positive.

In fact, it could allow teachers to learn to self-reflect on their own lessons, strategies, and skills

and make changes if needed: "There is a credibility factor to the word mentor. There is a value.

If someone has been teaching for a few years, they sure have something to offer" (Participant

16).

## Novice Teacher Retention

*The assumption is that if novice teachers are offered support, they will teach better, feel a greater sense of efficacy and self-confidence, and as a result, rates of attrition will decrease.*

*T. Meyer, "Novice and Teacher Learning . . ."*

Only three participants were willing to share an opinion about retention. Participant 18

said that the state of New Jersey had reduced the funds for school districts and that,

unfortunately, teachers were going to see the impact in their classrooms when their resources

were slashed in half, or taken away. Programs in place for afterschool activities could also

disappear, not to mention that some novice teachers' contracts might not be renewed due to a

lack of funds. On the surface, these things might not seem to influence the novice teachers'

decision to stay in the profession, but they could significantly affect the available resources and

effectiveness of the mentoring program; therefore, they may have a significant bearing on novice

teachers' decisions: "By Year 5 we lose 30% of teachers. Inability to fulfill some roles, loss of

state aid, loss of materials and technology" (Participant 18).

Participant 15 offered the following view, "Another aspect of retention is the constant

changes and demands from the district and the state." As a member of the mentoring panel, he

went through several workshops to learn to minimize problems associated with retention. No matter the training, it came down to state aid and funds available to keep teachers in place. As far as the feelings of unpreparedness and desperation while in the classroom during the first days, he offered a particular view and said that the problem in New Jersey was that the mentoring process was only for the first year. In his opinion, it should be for the length of their pre tenure years. He elaborated that a year was not enough for novice teachers to learn and feel prepared and that the district should consider multiple mentors and a mentorship program with a duration of more than one year. He also stated, "It will help with retention."

The perceived failures of the mentoring program could influence novice teachers' decisions to stay in the profession. Novice teachers' frustrations with the administration could make other districts or professions look more enticing:

> As far as retention is concerned I am not sure if we are getting enough information. It should be more realistic. A long time ago, we put out a manual for new teachers. It should be a lifeline for new teachers. If the lesson is tanking, what do I do? Something should be in place for new teachers to use in case of emergency. (Participant 6)

**Chapter Summary**

The researcher analyzed the perceptions and opinions of participants of a mentoring program in northern New Jersey. A group of 19 participants (mentors, mentees, and administrators) was interviewed about their perceptions, feelings, and insights regarding the program. The participants were located in three of the six schools that belong to the district. The topics the researcher found during the interviews included mentors' perceptions of the mentor's role, mentor's preparation, mentor's background, mentoring as a self-reflective tool, mentor's communication dynamics, elements of confidentiality; mentees' perceptions of initial experiences as a teacher and omissions in the mentoring experience; administrators' comments

about organizational recommendations; unexpected observations of participants; benefits and values of a mentor and mentee relationship; and novice teacher retention.

Newer participants were part of a formal mentoring program and met one-on-one with mentors on a daily basis. They met formally at the district level two to three times per year. Participants who began over 20 years ago relied on coworkers willing to share information and advice (called informal mentoring).

After analyzing the data, the researcher found that, regardless of whether the participants were part of a formal mentoring program, the results indicated that the participants relied on constant support from their peers to survive the first year in the profession.

The mentoring program in place was a professional-development opportunity for mentees and mentors and helped them evolve as professionals. The program might or might not have had an impact on teacher retention. According to the data collected, the state reduction of funds to the district studied could affect the availability of resources and opportunities. Teachers, mentors, and mentees might not find the same resources available next year.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The perception and feeling of not knowing what to do on the first day are not foreign to any new teacher, regardless of where they are located. According to the literature selected for this work, the implementation of a mentoring program has shown to help minimize these feelings and perceptions. This case study of a mentoring program in a northern New Jersey school district revealed the perceptions and feelings of both novice teachers and their mentors during the novice's initial experience as a teacher. The aim of this study was to see if the outcome in the literature selected agreed with the subject district's outcome. In the district researched, the mentoring program was in place to provide novice teachers the opportunity to learn, be guided, to grow in the most difficult time of their teaching careers (the first year), and to comply with the requirements of the state of New Jersey (https://nj.gov/education/license/provprogram.htmptp). 49 novice teachers and their mentors received an invitation letter from the researcher. Nineteen acceptances were received. The researcher interviewed the participants over a 2-month period.

This chapter connects the findings from chapter 4to the literature reviewed and answers the research questions: What are teachers' perceptions of mentoring programs on their development as educators? What are teachers' perceptions of the ability of mentoring to shape their decision to remain in the profession?

The themes that emerged from the interviews, which focused on the research questions were: (a) professional development, (b) retention, (c) multiple mentors,(d) coteaching, and (e) extension of the mentoring program. Each of these themes included: (a) the implications of the researcher's findings for policy, theory, and practice; (b) limitations of the study, (c) recommendations for future research, and (d) a brief summary.

**Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Literature and Implications**

**Professional Development**

The following research referred to a topic that arose during the interviews regarding professional development. A study in Macedonia by Petrovska et al. (2018) named "Mentoring in Teaching Profession" discussed the perception of participants in a mentoring program. The authors discussed the importance of mentoring in the educational system and that the knowledge gained by the novice teachers benefited the students. The study in Macedonia separated the perceptions of novice teachers by gender. This study has not made any differentiation based on gender and can say that, regardless of gender, novice teachers felt exactly the same way about their everyday experiences. The mentoring program in the northern New Jersey district has similarities to the one in Macedonia regarding professional development opportunities for teachers, and parallels can be seen as far as the outcomes of mentoring programs benefiting students. The authors found in their study that mentoring did influence both novice and experienced teachers' performance (Petrovska et al., 2018; Washburn-Moses, 2010).

The outcome of the study in Macedonia was that the mentoring system needed improvement, but the relationship and support between mentor and mentee were paramount in their professional development. They expressed the importance of the study, which showed that the relationship created between mentee and mentor supported "both the school leadership and the entire pedagogical team. . . . The established teacher gives a strong start to the young teacher, sharing not only his classroom and extracurricular experience but also his/her skills and attitudes" (Petrovska et al., 2018). This practice, as it was in Macedonia, was already in place in the northern New Jersey district.

Another study regarding professional development, this time from Pakistan, was written by Manzar-Abbass et al. (2017) and entitled "Impact of Mentoring on Teachers' Professional Development: Mentees' Perceptions." Their study was related to the effect professional development has on new teachers. The program that Pakistan implemented allowed seasoned teachers to become mentors to new teachers. Even though this is a common practice in mentoring at an international level, it offers an insight into an educational system that is willing to make improvements for teachers, knowing that it indirectly benefits students. The authors defined mentoring as an opportunity for veteran teachers to guide novice teachers "for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development" (Abbass et al., 2017; Anderson & Shannon, 1988, p. 40).

The program, in Pakistan, consisted of professional development sessions in all of their districts. The in-service professional development included follow-ups and help for teachers in the classroom. This approach was similar to the northern New Jersey district's mentoring program, which formed part of the novice teachers' and mentors' professional development. They had mandatory district-wide group meetings two to three times per year; they could meet daily if their schedules allow it; and if their schedules were not the same, mentors and mentees could request a professional development day to meet and discuss progress and issues.

Participants were no different from the ones portrayed and described in the literature reviewed. The participants who had remained in the profession and had never experienced a mentoring program, survived by finding colleagues to aid and support them. The mentees from the program felt like everyone else on the first day. They were confused and overwhelmed. Oversights and work-arounds have been identified, and it appears that the only reason novice teachers succeeded was due to their determination and the knowledge that they were doing what

they were meant to do. Novice teachers' desire to succeed and to better themselves are the key to a successful first year: "Therefore, teachers should be aware of their continuous professional development for keeping their knowledge up-to-date about the changes emerging in the education system" (Abbass et al., 2017).

The subject school district developed a plan to fulfill the needs of novice teachers and their mentors through their mentoring program. The implementation of the plan depended, in part, on the participants' schedules and availability. Mentees with differing schedules from their mentors would have liked more time with their mentors. Students are the ones who receive the benefits from the support and help given to novice teachers (Guskey, 2000). Ultimately, students are the ones whose success, teachers rely on.

The mentoring program in the subject district did count toward professional development. The district organized at least 20 hours of activities for teachers to sign up to earn hours towards their professional development. The subjects varied depending on the needs of the district at certain times. New teachers learned about curriculum, grading students, classroom management, new technology in the district, communicating with parents, and different approaches to teaching a lesson. However, the professional development offered by the district was not just for novice teachers. Every teacher must accrue a minimum of twenty hours. Any additional hours earned by the teachers outside the district, not only counted towards the requirement, but it also had a positive reflection on their end of year summative evaluation. Teachers were aware that their participation in activities in or out of the district could only enhance their knowledge and ability to benefit their students. "Ultimate function of teachers' professional development is to enhance student outcomes" (Guskey, 2000).

The following discussion is about professional development for mentors. A study from the mentor's point of view called "How do teacher mentors perceive their role, does it matter?" by Leshem (2013), based on a program in Israel, analyzed the results from two perspectives. One perspective was that mentees think of their mentors as parent figures, troubleshooters, scaffolders, counselors, supporters (Hawkey, 1997). This view aligns with the findings from this study, which showed that without their mentors, mentees would not have been able to survive their first year of teaching. Leshem said that in her findings there was an acknowledgement of respect for the role of mentor and that they felt pride in being highly recognized in the educational community" (Leshem, 2013).

The other perspective was that mentors did not feel appreciated; they did not feel they had time to do their own work, and they felt they had no identity. The author discussed that perhaps formal teacher education was not enough for teachers to be fully prepared to become mentors. She put emphasis on the fact that districts should implement training for mentors. The data collected in this study showed the opposite as far as the mentors' perceptions of their own role. The researcher found that mentors never complained about their workload, quite the contrary, they felt their work had value. Participant 16 said, "There is credibility to the word *mentor*. There is a value. If someone has been teaching for a few years, they sure have something to offer."

One mentor said he was not sure if he had helped his mentee enough, but he received validation when his mentee told him he was grateful for the information given. "Truly, I was not sure I was the right person for the mentee. I questioned myself 'Am I going to help him? Am I worthy of the opportunity given to me?'" (Participant 2)

Another participant commented on how he approached his mentee:

As a mentor, which I love that role, I would ask what do they want from me, I would give them the floor. If it was awkward, I would have brought up what helped me as a teacher: dealing with parents. (Participant 7)

One mentor explained how she wanted to be the mentor she never had:

I wanted to be a team member, someone they can go to, teach them about curriculum, and lesson planning. I wanted them to be comfortable. Adequate and confident with themselves, with the profession they chose. I wanted to be somebody they can go to. At this time, I have the perfect opportunity. (Participant 14)

Leshem commented in her study that mentors could definitely benefit from being trained on how to be mentors (2013), this study concurs with the possibility of workshops especially for mentors to prepare them for their role. The outcome of Leshem's study was that further research was needed in terms of developing teacher's self-efficacy ". . . and enhance their professional identity as a stepping stone to improving the status of the mentor in the educational system." (Leshem, 2013)

A recommendation would be to implement a professional development program specifically for mentors before the beginning of classes. Ideally, mentors should be notified early enough for them to participate in summer mentoring workshops. The implication is that the subject district could benefit from enhancing the mentors' preparation and effectiveness.

**Retention**

The mentoring program, according to the literature presented in chapter 2, is designed to help novice teachers overcome the feeling of isolation, confusion and overwhelming despair during their first year as teachers. These feelings play an important role in the novice teacher's decision to stay in the profession.

Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009) noted that mentoring was introduced as a deterrent for novice teachers to leave the teaching profession. According to their work, "attrition was an issue in the early 1980s in Israel" (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009).

Even though mentoring programs are in place to minimize novice teachers' perceptions of isolation and lack of preparation, the demands on teachers do not subside. The district and the state have deadlines that every teacher must comply with, for example, filing paperwork, uploading information such as grades and lesson plans, and reading students' individualized education programs (IEPs). Seasoned teachers can handle this, but at times it is not easy. Novice teachers feel the demands even more. It is not unusual for them to think they may have chosen the wrong career. Novice teachers still have to figure out if it is worth it for them to carry on as teachers in spite of the pressure or leave the profession. The data collected does not answer the question "What are teachers' perceptions of the ability of mentoring to shape their decision to remain in the profession?" However, it does show that novice teachers, who are recipients of a mentoring program, feel they are supported as professionals. Unfortunately, some answers show that no matter how hard novice teachers work; it is ultimately a funding decision. These participants may have been shortsighted due to the atmosphere within the district. There were going to be mass layoffs due to budget cuts and most of those losing their jobs were novice teachers. Therefore, respondents may have assumed that those losing their jobs were also going to leaving the profession. The reality is that if the budget eliminates their position, finding a job in other districts may be possible.

The following study focused on the educational community as a support group for novice teachers. The study "Collegial Support and Novice Teachers' Perceptions of Working Conditions" examined perceptions that novice teachers had of their working conditions in

Michigan and Indiana (Pogodzinski, 2013). The author discussed the working conditions created in school settings with the goal of improving teacher effectiveness and reducing teacher attrition. "The programs created provided support through professional development and mentoring programs (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011; Strong, 2009)" (Pogodzinski, 2013). Based on the data collected, the existence of a mentoring program that provides guidance to novice teachers can indeed help new teachers stay in the profession.

The researcher, when transcribing some of the responses, found similarities when novice teachers were describing the mentoring program in their school. Although they admitted that the unbelievable amount of work imposed on them during their first year was overwhelming, they overcame it because of the support they received from their colleagues through formal or informal mentoring. The positive perception of mentors in Pogodzinski's study is similar to the feelings of mentees in this study, for example,

> I am fortunate; I am in touch with my mentor every day because we have the same schedule and common planning. Bouncing off ideas has been helpful. Very approachable. I do not have to write questions and hope to meet her. I meet her every day. Classroom management, calling parents, etc. She is helping with my doc logs and has answers to all of my questions. (Participant 9)

This quote reflects the way the mentee feels about the support she receives within the program. Pogodzinski mentioned that if there was a collective climate of support toward novice teachers, chances are teachers would not consider leaving the profession (Pogodzinski, 2013). In the subject district, the attitude toward novice teachers was of collaboration. Particularly in some schools, teachers did not want to leave "the family" atmosphere.

Other topics that do not directly answer the research questions have emerged from the data collected, which are still very relevant to the discussion on mentoring.

**Multiple Mentors**

One of the participants in an administrative role mentioned that perhaps the district should consider a mentoring program where more than one mentor could work with a mentee. Almost like a community of mentors. Meyer (2002) wrote a study entitled "Novice Teacher Learning Communities: An Alternative to One-on-One Mentoring," in which he said that a learning community could be beneficial for novice teachers because they would not feel isolated in the learning process. There would be colleagues working together with the same goals and ". . . collaborative endeavors and shared norms, values, and practices." Participant 15 noted that one of the drawbacks to their program is that there is "only one mentor per mentee. Each mentee should have multiple mentors."

Meyer (2002) revealed the possibility of a school community influencing the making or breaking of a novice teacher. Meyer discussed how many novice teachers were part of a mentoring program where a single mentor was matched with a mentee and that novice teachers could benefit more if they were part of a learning community. Multiple mentors appeared to be effective in Meyer's California-based sample, which suggested that the approach could work in the mentoring program in northern New Jersey. The research indicated mentees found themselves relying on more than one person for advice and guidance.

The participants (mentors) who began their career before the concept of a mentoring program existed reported being able to survive in the educational arena because of their colleagues' support (informal mentoring). This support was key to their survival as teachers. This informal mentoring was provided with no monetary compensation and was due to the desire of seeing colleagues succeed. The concept of multiple mentors could be beneficial. A group of

mentors could offer help, as illustrated in Participant 14's comment: "The complete Physical Ed department gets together to give her feedback. They all pitch in."

It is important to note that, at this time, the northern New Jersey district's mentoring program functions along the state of New Jersey's guidelines of having one mentor per mentee. The researcher agrees with the idea that, instead of one mentor per mentee, a mentee could possibly have two or more mentors. This would allow the mentee access to different perspectives or approaches. The researcher recommends further research into the implementation of alternate mentoring programs. Examples might include a modified "common planning" program or having a pool of mentors for mentees. Common planning in the subject district took place when teachers in the same subject and grade had common time to share and discuss their lessons, objectives, and issues in general. Common planning depends on the particular school and teachers' availability.

A pool of mentors is another possibility: One mentee would have access to multiple mentors as well as resources. One of the complications of this approach would be the financial aspect. Currently, in the subject district, the mentees fund the mentors. Further research could clarify exactly how funding would be accomplished and whether a pool of mentees would fund a pool of mentors or each mentee would fund only fund one mentor.

**Coteaching**

The idea of a full-time mentor like a coteaching opportunity was found in this study's data. The following study was conducted with a sample from Israel, from the mentors' perspective (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009). The authors wrote this study because, during the 1980s, new teachers were leaving the profession for different career paths. The Israeli government decided to respond by implementing a mentoring program so that senior teachers

could work with novice teachers from day one (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009). This is similar to what happened in the state of New Jersey. The difference was that, in Israel, teachers who were assigned a mentee were relieved from their teaching duties for a year, whereas, in New Jersey, mentors maintain their teaching duties. An arrangement similar to the one in Israel could solve issues that have arisen regarding mentors' availability. A full-time mentoring program, as the one in Israel could resemble what is outlined in the comments below:

> My mentor is in my classroom. I coteach with him. I do not think it could have been any better for me. We do not need formal meetings because we get to plan together and discuss daily what I need to do. We had to figure out one lesson plan for each of the classes. He was helping with resource paper so I can do my doc log. I am in constant communication with everyone involved on what to do. (Participant 3)

Another participant from the physical education department, which typically utilizes a coteaching environment, described some of the benefits of this system of teaching:

> As a mentor, I wanted to be somebody they can go to. At this time, I have the perfect opportunity. My mentee has the same schedule as me. We talk every day. The complete Physical Ed department gets together to give her feedback. They all pitch in. We talk every day. How are the students reacting? We have the chance to go over the success of every lesson and reactions. We are constantly giving her suggestions. This is a good program. (Participant 14)

The perception of needing help and not having someone available would disappear if the mentoring program included having a mentor assigned full-time or even part-time to a mentee. This concept would not only be helpful but would also avoid comments such as "I wish I would have known that if the first day is awful, it is OK. It is not the end of the world. Do not worry if things do not go smoothly on the first day" (Participant 10).

The northern New Jersey district examined in this dissertation could benefit a great deal by introducing the concept of coteaching. The researcher found that this approach to mentoring could also minimize feelings of isolation and being ill prepared if a seasoned teacher or mentor was assigned to a novice teacher either full- or part-time—not to mention the effect on the novice

teacher's confidence. Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2011) discussed how, in Israel, the government allowed mentors to dedicate 100% of their time to the mentor role. In special circumstances, the government allowed mentors to be mentors in the morning and in the afternoon to be teachers.

A participant in the northern New Jersey District felt that being with her mentor in the same class with the same schedule gave her all the confidence, security, and guidance she needed to have an extraordinary first-year experience. Although the suggestion has merit, teacher availability and schedule flexibility would be needed for this to happen. The researcher recommends the inclusion of a full-time mentor (coteacher); however, funding would be one of the limitations, and further research, including a cost analysis, would be needed.

**Extension of the Mentoring Program**

Before starting this study, the researcher did not agree with mentoring periods spanning more than a year. However, after listening to the participants during the interviews, the researcher realized that a longer mentoring period could benefit the mentee. Six years ago, Participant 15, in the capacity of supervisor, was able to oversee the creation of a mentoring panel with the goal of instituting a mentoring program. Today, the program is in place and complies with the requirements of the State of New Jersey (https://nj.gov/education/license /provprogram.htm). He would like to see the program evolve with the needs of the district. One phase of this evolution would be increasing the number of years that the program helps the novice teachers: "It is only one year. It should be extended" (Participant 15).Coincidently, Meyer (2002), along with two university researchers, analyzed a learning-community program in a northern California school. The study covered the entire 4-year period of the program, and its objective was to learn how to minimize novice teachers' feelings of isolation at the beginning of their career. Meyer discovered that participants felt a lack of a sense of community and that the

teachers, in general, kept to themselves. However, many of them managed to find colleagues they were able to go to for help. In Meyer's study, a longer mentoring program might not have been a contributing factor to participants feeling less isolated. Some of them felt it was too lengthy. Because of the concept of learning communities offer promising results, further research is recommended (Meyer, 2002).

Meanwhile, in the present sample, one interview respondent suggested that, perhaps, the mentoring program should not be limited to just one year and should be in place until novice teachers attain tenure. In the subject district, teachers become tenured after 4 years and 1 day.

This recommendation would allow novice teachers and their mentors to work together continuously. The extension of the mentoring program might not be up to the district to consider. In the state of New Jersey, a 1-year mentoring program is law. Further research into this is needed.

## Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that 49 teachers and their mentors were invited to participate, but only 19 people accepted the invitation. Many mentees and their mentors declined because their mentee's contracts were not renewed due to budget cuts. Although budget cuts were happening, the mood, in general, was depressing and hopeless for many teachers. Others felt that the time of the year did not allow them to allocate time for the interviews.

Unforeseen delays were experienced in the initial phases of the study (e.g., scheduling and paperwork). Participants were hesitant to open up about their perceptions of the mentoring program because the interviews took place on-site, and they worried about being identified, even though they had been informed that the study was anonymous.

## Additional Recommendations

### Manual and Checklist Availability

The researcher was given a copy of the checklist. The checklist was supposed to have been distributed to mentors and mentees at the beginning of classes. However, none of the participants who were interviewed acknowledged having ever seen it. The researcher recommends that the mentoring panel review the procedures, including distribution of the checklist, to make sure every participant has access to it, acknowledges that they have seen it prior to the start of classes, and submits the filled in and signed checklist at the appropriate intervals. The researcher also recommends creating a program manual that fully describes the program and duties and responsibilities of everyone connected with the program. The manual should also include checklists of the steps necessary to succeed in the program. It should be presented to novice teachers and their assigned mentors before the beginning of classes. New teachers should be able to use it as a guide to navigate their first days of classes as well as their first year as a teacher.

### Meeting Without Theoretical Work/More Practical

The formal and mandatory meetings that took place as a group (comprised of mentees, mentors, and administrators) should be an opportunity to talk among themselves and give each other feedback. It should not be based on a script. It should happen based on the needs of the participants. The researcher recommends considering this observation.

### Keeping Mentors and Mentees with the Same Schedule and Location

It is recommended that mentors be in the same school, with a similar schedule, in the same subject discipline as their mentees. It is acknowledged that this recommendation might not

be possible due to last minute hiring when schedules and other considerations are already in place.

## Implications for Practice

The study began with the goal of analyzing the perceptions and feelings of both novice teachers and mentors in a mentoring program in northern New Jersey. The data showed that the mentoring program in place was already offering opportunities for growth for both mentors and mentees. Perhaps, if all of the recommendations suggested were implemented, the mentoring program could continue to foster growth in a collaborative climate. Perhaps more time with mentors, or multiple mentors, would help improve participants' perceptions regarding the program. As it is, participants felt grateful and supported within the program. The mentees' self-confidence had grown to the point that many of them were teaching on intuition as opposed to following guidance previously received. The most important tool that any teacher could learn as a novice teacher, or mentor, is the ability to reflect on the strategies, lessons, and methods they utilize in their classroom. The district offered opportunities and tools to facilitate self-reflection. The onus is on the mentees and mentors to take advantage of those opportunities. The participants were aware of the opportunities and tools offered to them because they knew the district took seriously its role of improving tools for practices in the classroom, such as the latest digital programs, the newest interactive whiteboards and subscriptions to online programs that students enjoy. Even with the positive perceptions the novice teachers had about the mentoring program, they must realize that their commitment to take advice and guidance from their mentors is what would make or break their ability to become an effective and influential educator. In addition, if the district continues to support the program and is willing to consider some of the

recommendations, the results would benefit the district by influencing the participants and the students.

## Summary and Conclusion

The data collected for the present study showed a close relationship with the extant findings in the areas of teachers' retention, professional development, and a quality-mentoring program. Mentors were excited to offer help and continuous support to their mentees. The mentors received validation from the success of their mentees' first year. If mentees and mentors participated in opportunities for professional development, it is unlikely they would consider leaving the profession. Professional development courses offered through (or out of) the district were all contributing factors to teachers' success. Every single decision the district takes regarding professional development courses (whether online or in person), the commitment to improve the caliber of the mentoring program, and the technology implemented for teachers' facilitation of lessons are all part of the district's efforts to improve teacher efficacy as well as student outcomes.

Novice teachers from the northern New Jersey district were committed to working hard and responded to the demands imposed on them, especially with the guidance of their mentors who were equally committed to facilitating and guiding their mentees. Mentors and mentees' positive perceptions about the program were unusual. They both agreed on the influence that the program had on their professional development. The program in place was not flawless, but it was effective and collaborative. Potentially, it had all of the elements to become flawless, particularly eager mentors willing to keep showing the way to their mentees. "The assumption is that if novice teachers are offered support, they will teach better, feel a greater sense of efficacy and self-confidence, and as a result, rates of attrition will decrease" (Meyer 2002).

# GLOSSARY

**Alternate route.** The New Jersey Department of Education (n.d.) defines the Alternate Route program as "*a non-traditional teacher preparation program* [emphasis original] designed for those individuals who HAVE NOT [emphasis original] completed a formal teacher preparation program at an accredited college or university but wish to obtain the necessary training to become a NJ certified teacher."

**Categories.** Grouping codes according to an interpreted relationship among the codes.

**Codes.** Codes are the "chunks" or "segments" that hold a particular meaning.

**Common planning.** In schools, common planning time refers to any period of time that is scheduled during the school day for multiple teachers, or teams of teachers, to work together. In most cases, common planning time is considered to be a form of professional development because its primary purpose is to bring teachers together to learn from one another and collaborate on projects that will lead to improvements in lesson quality, instructional effectiveness, and student achievement.

**Focus group.** A *focus group* is a demographically diverse group of people assembled to participate in a guided discussion about a particular product before it is launched or to provide ongoing feedback on a political campaign, television series, and so forth.

**Mentee.** Merriam-Webster defines *mentee* as "one who is being mentored."

**Mentor.** Merriam-Webster defines *mentor* as "a trusted counselor or guide."

**Veteran teachers.** The term *veteran* originates from the Latin word *veteranus*, meaning "old." According to Merriam-Webster, a veteran is "a person of long experience usually in some occupation or skill." Based on this definition, veteran teachers are experienced teachers who have served in the teaching profession for a lengthy period of time.

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# APPENDIX A

# STUDY APPROVAL

**SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Phone:          Fax:          Web:

February 14, 2019

Seton Hall University
College of Education & Human Services
Dept. of Education Leadership Management & Policy

Re: Approval for Dissertation Proposal – Solicitation of Employees

Marta Werman, has district approval to solicit teachers and administrators to interview for her doctoral research entitled "An Analysis of a Mentoring Program in Northern New Jersey".

The approval includes interviewing fifteen mentors, fifteen mentees and five administrators. Interviews are to be conducted outside of the school day.

A copy of the approved solicitation letter is attached.

Sincerely,
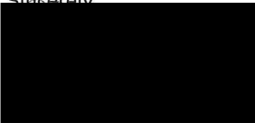
Encl.

cc: Marta Werman

# SETON HALL ▦ UNIVERSITY™
## 1 8 5 6

April 24, 2019

Marta Yafar-Werman

███████████████

Dear Ms. Yafar-Werman,

The IRB is in receipt of the application for your research entitled "An Analysis of a Mentoring Program in a Northern New Jersey School District."

Your Application does not fall under the purview of the IRB because, as you describe it in your Application, it is a non-generalizable case study for the ███████████ School District only.

Sincerely,

████████████████████████

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

Cc:    Dr. Daniel Gutmore

A  HOME  FOR  THE  MIND,  THE  HEART  AND  THE  SPIRIT

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS, BY PARTICIPANT

**Interview Questions**

1.  As I explained prior to the interview, I am researching "the role of mentoring" with novice teachers. I am looking at the program from different points of view. Mentees and mentors. Did you have a mentor on your first year of teaching? (mentors only)Can you describe your first day as a teacher? (mentees and mentors)

2.  As a new teacher, what did you hope to have covered during your initial meetings with your mentor? What questions did you hope to have been answered from these meetings which weren't?(mentees)

3.  Describe a typical meeting with your mentor/mentee and the topics covered? (mentors and mentees)

4.  Goals of these questions: In the weeks following the initial meeting with your mentor/mentee did your impressions regarding the program, the mentor/mentee, your attitude toward teaching, etc. change from the first meetings? If so, how? (mentors and mentees)

5.  In your opinion what was not covered or discussed in your meetings that you wish were? (mentors and mentees)

6.  Jumping from the first day of class to now, how do you describe a typical day in your classroom? How much has it changed from the first day? And how much of that change was due to mentoring? How much was your own intuition? (mentees)

7.  Thinking back to your first day as a teacher, is there anything you wish you would have known then, but you were not told? (What is the most valuable piece of information you wish you would have had on your first day as a teacher?) (What is the most valuable piece of information that you were told?)

8.  Can you offer any advice to anyone starting to teach tomorrow? (mentors and mentees)

9.  This question is strictly for mentors: can you compare programs of today with the one you experienced when you began? Was it in New Jersey?

**Administrator Questions**

1. Are you familiar with our district's mentoring program? (If yes: In what capacity?)

2. Have you ever been a mentor? Have you ever had a mentor? If so, was the experience a positive one? Did this experience influence your opinion of our district's mentoring program?

3. Are you familiar with mentoring programs in other districts, or businesses? If so, where? when? In what capacity?

4. What are some of the most beneficial aspects of our district's mentoring program? Of mentoring programs in general?

5. Do you see room for improvement in our district's mentoring program and if so what are the improvements you would like to see?

6. Do you perceive our district's mentoring program as professional development for either the mentors or the mentees? Do you see room for improvement in this regard?

7. Do you believe this mentoring program has had an impact (either positive or negative) on new teacher retention? Do you believe there is a connection between the mentoring program and teacher retention?

**Mentee 1**

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| 1 | "I met with my mentor for the first time on my first day of class. He went on by saying " I wished I met him more time. I was too nervous. But I neglected asking for more time and more help". |
| 2 | He wishes there was more clarity on how to deal with parents. College did not prepare him for that. He felt that because of their schedule the meeting times were not frequent. He wished for more common planning time. |
| 3 | Met every Tuesday after school. At the beginning, they covered topics relevant to their everyday life as a teacher: genesis, schoology, etc. He said the topics they get to go over are "Lately procedures for testing". |
| 4 and 5 | The mentee said: "Definitely, things got better. As time went by, I felt more comfortable and less nervous. At the beginning, I did not know what questions to ask. Again, I would have liked to know how to deal with parents in a professional way without sounding harsh. I wish I would have known what kind of materials were available to me." |
| 6 | No answer |
| 7 | He liked how his mentor used the reward system with his students. He decided to do the same in his class for behavior issues. Moreover, he is very happy to report that this practice is working. He felt that the reward practice minimizes behavior issues in the class. |
| 8 | On the question of what advice to offer new teachers beginning in September, he said: "Don't be afraid to ask questions". |

## Mentee 2

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| 1 | "Lucky I felt, since I have been doing long term replacements so I knew many things. But this is the first time I have my own class. Bazar day, very nervous. It was surreal. I could not believe it was happening and then everything was great. Like the feelings of getting to a rollercoaster. |
| 2 | "I wish my mentor helped me prioritize. How much time do I spend on a topic? Etc."I wish they would have giving me more information on the amount of paper work I had to complete by certain date: for example doc logs. I was surprised the amount of work I had to do and research from my pile of papers, emails etc. How do I move on a regular day, how much time to spend on any subject? What works best for 4th grade? What kind of systems and procedures for this grade? This is the first time I had my own class. |
| 3 | "A regular meeting with my mentor is me bringing up a question on how I use something in my class, asking for resources. I am glad my mentor was next door and she was always willing to answer or meet with me. We met formally often and at the beginning, we talked about procedures, schedule and so forth. What kind of material do you use when you teach long division? Resources. |
| 4 | Everything was covered and I was ready to go. I am lucky my mentor is next door. I can talk to her. We meet every single day for at least 10 minutes. We have common planning together. |
| 5 | "I wish they would have giving me the information of the doc logs a lot sooner. Therefore, I am not researching and finding materials at the end of the school year. I felt ready to go. I had the tools. I met with my mentor every day for at least 10 minutes plus common planning. I wished I was told about finalizing grades. I cannot pinpoint anything in particular, yet things were done on time. |
| 6 | Things changed a lot from the beginning. I do things in the classroom trusting my own intuition. I do more of my own things. At the beginning, it was just the way it was given to me. I would ask:How did you teach something and I adapt it to my class? I scale it based on the learning abilities of my students. |
| 7 | No data |
| 8 | Be ready today to start tomorrow. If you are teaching tomorrow, you should be in your classroom. |

# Mentee 3

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| 1 | The first day was nerve racking. I was supposed to be at a different school. I was hired at the last minute. I only had one or two meetings with my mentor. I was thrown into it. Very chaotic. I was working with someone I did not know. I believe I found out in the few days I was going to be part of a mentoring program. A mentor was assigned to me. |
| 2 | I teach three classes together. We have opportunity to work in all aspects. I have the perfect setting. We have same schedules. Even though the district was not sure if that was going to be my setting. |
| 3 | "My mentor is in my classroom. I coteach with him. I do not think it could have been any better for me. We do not need formal meetings because we get to plan together and discuss daily what I need to do." We had to figure out one lesson plan for each of the classes. He was helping with resource paper so I can do my doc log. I am in a constant communication with everyone involved on what to do. |
| 4 | I felt a lot of information was given to me. At the end there was more because of the way we felt (comfortable). As the time progressed the better, our relationship it became. I do not feel like it is a stupid question anymore. |
| 5 | "The information I wish my mentor would have giving me sooner is: The doc log information without a doubt. I wish they mentioned the doc log at the beginning. Not at the end. I have four months of materials to sift though. |
| 6 and 7 | My relationship with my mentor is great. Now we flow and we know what to expect from each other. At the beginning, it was different. We know what we are going to do, I know my students. Etc. |
| 8 | Advice: Take a deep breath. You will get through it. Take it all in. Plan. Organize and ask as many questions as you can possible ask. Remember, at the end it will be crazy but worth it. |

## Mentee 4

| Question | Response |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | "I was very nervous. I am in an alternate route program. I am in my first year of teaching. I am a behaviorist. I was overwhelmed to learn so many things like paper work regarding my students, data collection. Lots of paperwork. Nerve racking etc. |
| 2 | Unfortunately, my mentor is not in the same school. Therefore, that plays a difficult role because I cannot just run next door and ask a question that just come up. I knew I was going to have a mentor. She is in a different building. I did not know we pay from our pockets. We did many of the meetings over the phone. I could not bring work home. I have a special needs child at home. |
| 3 | Many of the meetings that took place between us were via face time on the phone. It was mainly about the aides in the classroom. It was about staff and personnel. The drama of the week. I did not know how to address them since I am not their supervisor. My mentor helped me with that. That was the most difficult situation. Dealing with the adults in the room. |
| 3 and 4 | I'm new to teaching. So, all of the paperwork was overwhelming. Doc log. (document log) SGO's, PDP's (professional development plan).I am always feeling I am behind. It is time consuming. Those things were the most important things to be addressed at the beginning. But nobody told me how to go about it at the beginning. |
| 5 | My mentor concentrated on the things I needed right away like IEP's reading and so forth. Even though things I had done. But I was always in a panic.<br>As a first year it would be nice if we get a list at the beginning of the year of things we need to do like PDP, doc logs, etc. Reading IEP direct, for special needs children needed to be addressed sooner. |
| 6 | No data |
| 7 | My mentor did help me about the staff, and how to deal with them. What feedback do I give them? How do I change my aides if they are not working with certain students?<br><br>My mentor checks with me regularly. She is being paid for it. So, I'm glad it occurs to her to call me. I ask for help when I need it now. She reaches out to me often about paperwork, computer. Prior to this year I never heard of My Learning plan (MLP). Never seen it before. So, I could have used more information about it sooner. That was difficult. I spent a great deal of time on SGO's.<br><br>I was told at the beginning I had to tell the adults I am the boss. I did not realize how difficult it would be. I have more control. Being worn the adults were the most |

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| | difficult part of my job. Honestly, I was warned. Everyone said you need to show them who the boss is. I am not here to make friend. |
| 8 | Advice: The hardest thing is leaving the work at work. Not bringing anything home. So guess separating both. School from work. Data sheet was brought home at the beginning. Now, I do not. So, I guess is to tell them to leave work at work. |

## Mentee 5

| Question | Response |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | I had a different perspective from newer students or teachers. I am older. I had a background. I worked in the district for three years before getting the job, so I had a lot of familiarity with what to do on the first day. The only difference from before is that now I have my own students. |
| 2 | The biggest thing for me it was the MLP, SGO's, writing the IEP's. What do I do with IEP's? |
| 3 | I am fortunate; I am in touch with my mentor every day because we have the same schedule and common planning. Bouncing off ideas has been helpful. Very approachable. I do not have to write questions and hope to meet her. I meet her every day. |
| 4 and 5 | Classroom management, calling parents etc. She is helping with my doc logs, and answer questions to all of my questions. We have the same schedule and common planning. Bouncing off ideas has been helpful. I do not have to write questions and hope to meet her. I meet her every day. She is helping answer all of my questions.<br><br>It has been addressed before. Now I feel more comfortable than at the beginning as far as asking questions. She is always willing to share information. Classroom management is a main topic that we talk a lot. When I went to observe them, I realized they were doing great things I wanted to copy it and I ask permission.<br><br>It has been a positive experience. I can ask her anything and she gives me the answers. Very available and willing to share information. Doc logs for sure. Getting some ideas on what to put in it would have been helpful. Suggestions etc. |
| 6 | N the question of working on my own intuition or guidance from my mentor I have to say it is a combination of both. Subbing helped me a great deal. I am confident I can do this. This is possible. Classroom management was the main issue I needed help with. There is no better way of preparing than just doing it. Build on that confidence. |
| 7 | Most valuable information received getting the information about IEP's (Individual Educational Plan). |
| 8 | If you can sub, please do it. Be in a classroom. It is a great experience. If you have sixty credits get into a classroom. Substitute teacher is better preparation than student teaching. |

# Mentee 6

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| 1 | I had an alternate route. I am just finishing the requirements to teach. It was nerve racking. I did not know what expect. I never done this before. I knew I was going to be in a mentoring program. |
| | Having someone in the same school with the same schedule and having her as my disposal it was helpful. |
| 2 | No data |
| 3 | I am with my mentor all day. We do not have to plan. I go to her every time I have a question: How long a lesson should take? Planning lessons together was helpful. |
| 4 | No data |
| 5 | No data |
| 6 | I am taking initiatives and it seems to be ok. Also watching my colleagues in the room do their work it helps. Things started to make more sense now. Things I did not quite get at the beginning now it is beginning to make more sense. I am more comfortable doing things on my own. |
| 7 | No data |
| 8 | Advice: Stay in people's classes and observe. Go and observe as many people as you can. Ask the mentors for help. Get comfortable with the people around you. |

**Mentee 7**

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| 1 | I was aware that I was going to have a mentor in the alternate route program. I met with my mentor half a day as a professional development. I was hired as a Technology teacher and I did not have my own room. When the teacher came into the room with her students and left them with me I knew I was going to be on my own. The first day was unusual. I was in a cart. I was trying to teach 1$^{st}$ grade to log on into the computers. So I knew it was going to take a while. |
| 2 | The only question is what are things my mentor did not tell me? What were the things my mentor did not tell me and I was going to get hit in the first 2 years? What to do if students tell me they miss mom at home? Questions like that. We focused on that. My mentor was not in the same field. We were teaching different age groups. Different subjects at different schools. |
| 3 | A typical meeting was in CM after school. Met every Monday in lieu of the faculty meeting. |
| | Questions were answered completely. 100%. |
| 4 | No data |
| 5 | One thing: I wish for my mentor to have come to observe me and give me feedback. If they only knew how much I needed that. |
| 6 | Impressions: I did not know what the trajectory of my lesson was going to take. Now I know where I will get with certain topic and certain group. |
| 7 | Now I know what to do, I even know what my week will look like and how the projects are going to be. Before I did not know how long anything was going to take. I know now how to implement and adapt. We did not talk about curriculum, just day-to-day unexpected and possible observation. Maybe it was like a therapy session. I felt I was prepared. |
| 8 | Valuable piece of info: Do the best you can, you are working for your students. Do not panic. Do not lose control of the class. Feel confident. |
| 9 | Advice: You better love what you are doing. Otherwise, it will be difficult. If they see you are not confident teaching the lesson, they will know. |

**Mentee 8**

| Question | Response |
| --- | --- |
| 1–5 | "In recalling my beginning days of teaching which began thirty plus years ago initially in New York and thereafter in the state of New Jersey I can say a mentoring type of program was non-existent. There was no supervisor for teachers or teacher-to-teacher mentorship that took place. In both teaching positions I merely was led to books and supplies that existed; in addition, I was not given any direction as to what lessons have been previously implemented or used, and what type of material should be covered. In both positions many of my lessons were created with ideas I had accumulated from college studies, or activities which I had developed on my own." (Participant19) |
| 6–9 | No data |

## Mentor 1

| Question | Response |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | "I'm looking back to 40 years. I was in Newark in the worst area possible. The issues at school was about drugs, weapons etc. There was no mentoring program in the school. No training whatsoever. In fact, in my first year of teaching I was never observed. I was however, lucky enough, to find some help in coworkers (whom I still keep touch). |
| | I reported to work the first day and I was handed a sign and told to go to the picket line. I did this for two days. On the third day, I had a new contract. |
| 2 | I wish someone would have told me how to handle emotionally disturbed students. I had to learn everything as I went on my day. I learned on the job. It was trial and error. If I had any mentoring it was an informal situation through coworkers. |
| 3 | I made sure he knew about procedures of every day teaching. How to present his lessons. We talked about behavioral issues and showed him and talked to him about a reward system I use in my classroom. |
| 4 | "I underestimated my mentee". He was not sure if he helped his mentee enough but he received validation when his mentee told him he was grateful for the information given. |
| 5–7 | "Truly, I was not sure I was the right person for the mentee. I questioned myself Am I going to help him. Am I worthy of the opportunity given to me? |
| 8 | Positive attitude and accept the unexpected. |
| 9 | I had nothing. No Department head, no coordinator, only coworkers. |

**Mentor 2**

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| 1 | My first day was terrifying. I guess the mentors were set up prior to the first day of school. I don't remember having too much help. I don't remember knowing I was supposed to have help. It was awful. I did not know if I was going to have some type of help or if I was supposed to buy my own materials. I had two good teachers next to me who helped me but I did not know what questions to ask. I was on my own. Nobody told me what to do. I felt I was winging it. Found an empty classroom. Just tables and chairs. I asked myself "Am I supposed to buy the rest of furniture?" What am I doing with these kids? I felt I did not have someone on my side telling me what to do. Entering into the room and finding just desks and chairs. I felt I was winging it. My mentor said come to me if you have any questions but I did not know what to ask. I believe we are now in that direction. We have more guidance. |
| 2 | I wish I was told about procedures etc. I did not know what questions to ask. It is not like now. We should know everything. Every single steps we do in the classroom. We should know. How do I set up my schedule? |
| 3 | I am lucky we are next to each other and we talk daily and get the chance to check in often. Therefore, I bring things up a lot about Doc log, Schoology. On the other hand, he asks me if he is stuck. I think at the beginning I was not sure at what level my mentee was and what was bringing to the table. He did bring a lot to the table. He had experience. Informal help from colleagues and neighbors next to my room. |
| 4 | I wish I would have pressed about classroom management. He struggles with. It should have been sooner. At the beginning, it's the time to take care of behavior. It's ok not to be their friends. Structured. In a routine. From the beginning. |
| 5 | Setting procedures early. |
| 6–8 | No data |
| 9 | Is tougher than they think. They should make priority. Not easy |
| 10 | Retention- I am not sure if we are getting enough information. It should be more realistic.

Long time ago we put a manual for new teachers. It should be a lifeline for new teachers. If the lesson is tanking, what do I do? Something should be in place for new teachers to use in case of emergency. |

## Mentor 3

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| 1 | I was excited, thrilled, vertigo. Getting in the class was everything I dreamed off. It was something I always wanted to do. Brought me back to 4th grade. She was telling me someday I would make a great teacher. It was scary but I felt now is the chance to do what I always wanted to do. Be a teacher. Felt that this was my second chance. <br><br> While I was a mentee I wanted my mentor to make sure I was not going to fail. |
| 2 | She covered what I wanted her to cover, what I needed. It was drilled in our heads that we needed to know curriculum. She covered what I always wanted to cover. 60 % of teachers fail because of class management. That was taught in college. As a mentor, which I love that role. |
| 3 | I would ask what do they want from me; I would give them the floor. If it was awkward I would brought up what helped me as a teacher: dealing with parents. But dealing with parents it was an important to know how to do it. So, I would make sure I would encourage them to always call home. Lately I have not had a mentee but I am in the panel of the mentoring program. <br> Not always and the district knew it. District got into what was going on as far as why is not successful. So, they had to make it more efficient. |
| 4 | No data |
| 5 | As a mentee I wish I would have been given a list to cover. As a mentor, I wish I had had a list ready for them to use throughout the year. <br> I knew what to do. I had experience with my own kids. Relationship with parents first. Making sure parents knew they can call anytime was important. I'm more confident. Important information: I wish I would be more relaxed. I was very stressed. |
| 6 | No data |
| 7 | We found out what teachers wanted is time. They want time to work on doc logs, professional time to observe. |
| 8 | If they are genuine about their calling let, they know you are for them. Be yourself. Ask them if there is something your child would know about you. Assure them you are there for them. <br> They are not getting enough support. Seems like a business. Must be in the same school, same schedule. Quality time. |

| Question | Response |
|----------|----------|
| | Confidentiality is the most important thing you can offer your mentee. Whatever they tell you. Unless is something dangerous. Nobody should know about what you know about the new teacher. |
| | Important for the administrator to match the mentor with the mentee. Same field. Must be a veteran. Not less than six years. |
| 9 | No data |
| 10 | No data |

## Mentor 4

| Question | Response |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | It was in 1997, I think I cried. There was no mentoring program at all, and I was a Special Education Teacher. I taught Autistic Children in a Pre-school specialized. No help at all. I had no materials, no toys just a good training before the school started. It would have been wonderful to have a "buddy" system or something like that. The strangest thing in this district is that general education teachers had a mentoring program, but special education did not. |
| 2 | If I had a mentor I would have liked to know the little things first: where is the emergency bag with all of instructions for fire drills? How do I communicate with parents? Do I send a welcome letter? What type of things do I have to order? What should I have in my classroom? What Am I allowed to do? Questions like that, they have nothing to do with teaching but everything to do with teaching. What do I do when children cry? |
|  | As a mentor I answer: How to handle the adults in the classroom like teachers' aides. How to manage them. ABA program. I have 13 adults in the classroom that they do not teach you about.I wish I would have known that if the first day is awful is Ok. It is not the end of the world. |
| 3–7 | I do not know if I gave her everything she needed. She is in a different building. I tried to work together on the technological part and how to navigate the program. I think she learned to take care of things needed to be taken care immediately. In special education, you can plan but not always, we get to do what we plan. I wish somebody would have told me, that if the first day is awful, it is ok. Advice: Same building if that is possible. I did not think what the panel planned was helpful; just give us common planning time to discuss questions. Questions about back to school, conferences, SGO's, etc. |
| 8 | Do not worry if things do not go smoothly on the first day. |
| 9 | Retention: "I do not think we are giving them all the tools, but we are on the right track. I believe the program should be longer than a year for them to be feel equipped. I told my mentee that regardless of the year mark for the mentoring program to last, I will still be here to help them. Nothing is more important, for these mentees, than to feel supported. This is a vocational decision on my part, offering my help past the one year of the mentoring program" |
| 10 | No data |

# Mentor 5

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| 1 | I did not have a mentor. It was September of 1980.They had coordinators. These coordinators were asked to come prior to the beginning of classes and work with new teachers. I did have support and we were also asked to come earlier and work with the coordinators. They gave me all kind of information. However, the only Physical Ed teacher was I. The rest were other subjects and specials classes. Nobody else was there as far as the same subject. |
| 2 | "I wanted to be a team member, someone they can go to, teach them about curriculum, and lesson planning. I wanted them to feel comfortable. I wanted them to be adequate and confident with themselves with the profession they chose. If they were not adequate, students were going to be the ones who suffered.At this time, I have the perfect opportunity to be with mentee at the same location and same schedule. |
| 3 | My mentee is in my department, she has the same schedule than me. We talk every day. The complete physical Ed department gets together to give her feedback. They all pitch in. We talk every day. How are the students reacting? We have the chance to go over success of every lessons and reactions. We are constantly giving her suggestions. |
| 4–6 | No data |
| 7 | "The most valuable piece of information I received was communication. Dealing with all stakeholders in a professional way."<br><br>"This a good program. Even though I am the mentee, the whole Physical Education team works with my mentee and gives her advice. The only problem is that I just do not think as a group for mentoring we meet often enough. There should not be formal meetings, just more time to meet and talk to other mentors and mentees. However, I have the best possible scenario." |
| 8 | One advice I would give is to be professional. There is a fine line. My mentee is jovial with the students. The kids should not feel so comfortable, especially at the beginning. They should know that teachers are to be respected. Students should know who the teacher is.<br>"Also, we as mentors should understand that we are a valuable piece of resource for our mentee. |
| 9–10 | No data |

# Mentor 6

| Question | Response |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | As a teacher and mentee, I did not have a mentor or a mentoring program. That was 33 years ago. |
| | I student taught under someone extraordinary and prepared me in ways that nobody would believe me. She taught me about curriculum, etc. Informal mentoring. I talked to other teachers who were physical education teacher and discussed different things to use in my classes. |
| 2 | As a mentor, I did not get across discipline issues. I was concentrating about positive things. |
| 3 | A typical meeting was covering the questions I would ask them to bring over, problems in the class. Questions like, what is another way to teach a subject? Mainly telling them there is no one way of teaching something. There are many approaches. It was about showing them and demonstrating all of the different ways of teaching a lesson. |
| | I mentored few people. I tried to meet every day for at least few minutes. Whatever I did not get to cover at the beginning I was catching up in the following meetings. |
| 4–5 | I did also get the chance to observe my mentees and often I asked permission to use their materials because it was phenomenal. |
| | Paper work I told them to wait until later. There were things that needed immediate attention. |
| 6 | Valuable information: People said to treat everyone the same way and I completely disagreed. I did things my way. Children are different. Therefore they have to be treated differently. |
| | The mentees are different from I used to see. They are less humble. More entitled than before. It is a generational thing. |
| 7 | No data |
| 8 | If they only knew, how much they can learn from others. |
| 9–10 | No data |

## Mentor 7

| Question | Response |
| --- | --- |
| 1–7 | "There was no mentoring program in place, long before that became a thing, but I did know that I was going to get some type of help. I had a unique opportunity to work in the same district where I lived. So I had an informal community rallying for me. It did not help me when I got in front of the 2nd grade class and the door was closed. I knew I was being supported. I also knew there was a lot of pressure put on me as well as expectations. Some of the people in that community were teachers who understood the expectations. I taught second grade and the second chairperson was my former 2nd grade teacher, so there was the need of making her proud and an inherent pride. She was stickler for detail and perfection. She was never called a mentor but the Principal leaned heavily on her when she realized I began to crash and burn few weeks in. She was there to help me." |
| | "However, my first day was a disaster. I wish I can go back and tell my students I am so sorry, but I did not know what I was doing then. I thought I was so ready, especially because I student taught the same grade, same school. In fact, I did not know what I was signing up for. I wanted to be a teacher my students always remember. But I wanted to quit after the end of the first day. I felt complete helplessness. I felt I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But I was in the right place but I was, I just did not know what to do. Keeping in mind that I went to a teachers' college, but I did not feel prepared. Children did not seem busy. I went home and my community waiting on the sidelines was told "I quit". I was prepared on the outside, but I had no idea of what was going to happen. Those were my emotions on the first day. I reflect on that day every year I begin classes". |
| 8 | Someone to take the lead and not wait to crash and burn to ask for help. In addition, because you do not know what you do not know, they should get all information upfront and not wait until teachers' crash and burn. |
| | Advise: remember always your students are somebody's children. You might be the best part of their day. You do not know what they are going home to or where they are coming from. So, be kind. |
| | "Human element can't be underestimated. I worked around great teachers and models and they had to have great models to follow. |
| | It's a reflective tool that forces you to examine your ways." At the end of year, that tool helps you improve some of the practices. |
| 9 | Mentoring program: it exists. It is a positive thing. Credibility to the word mentor. There is a value. If someone has been teaching for few years, they sure have something to offer. |

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
|  | "It is not mentoring if you are on you are on your own, I believe there is not a perfect matching with a mentee. It should not be stagnate; it should be more fluid, no lectures. It should be a living document. At this time, the committee of the mentoring program is operating from a script. Nothing is practical everything is theoretical. There has to be a way to improve.<br>Positive: It is a self-reflective tool and it exists. |
| 10 | No data |

**Mentor 8**

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| 1 | As a mentee, I was very nervous, sometimes I felt like I was asking questions like those that I did not know what to do. With time, I felt more comfortable asking questions. As a mentor, I made sure my mentees were comfortable talking to me. I explained to my mentee about the mentoring program. |
| 2 | As a mentee, I learned in college theory on what to do but not how to do certain things. My concern was classroom management. I asked my mentor to come in and show me how to handle things in the classroom. |
| 3 | As a mentor, we met once per week. We had common planning. It was in different school. We were able to meet in and out of the school. We would email, meet in the parking lot, just whenever we needed to address issues we met. As a mentee, we also met once per week and went over the plans for the week. My mentor was very willing to meet with me. |
| 4 | I was told about many things, but implementation and classroom management was a problem. I tried to address those issues with my mentee. |
| 5–7 | Having someone to go to, it is wonderful. How about assessments and charts? Having a mentor a teacher feels comfortable going to and asking questions is a great deal. |
| 8 | Advise: I would say that they must remember where the kids are coming from. To be patient with our students, never know what they are going through. Having someone to go to if there is a question about assessment, keeping track of they know. How to do charts. Having a mentor is very important. Great support system. In my other district were paired up with another new Spanish teacher. There was no structured program. |

# Administrator 1

 "I started with the mentoring panel six years ago, under a different administration in a cohort model. I worked in the capacity of a supervisor. I have only been a mentee during my first year. It was not an organized system in, where we met together with other mentees. It was up to the mentor to decide to call or meet with me. Thankfully, I had a good mentor, someone with more time who took me under his wing. Since that time, we orchestrated a professional development committee where we get to meet three times per year and with different activities to do during these meetings. In those meetings, we made sure the mentors knew what to do with their mentees. Their responsibilities as mentors were discussed. It has expanded.

Retention: "When I was in the panel I attended different workshops to learn the best way to keep teachers in place. But it always ended as a budget issue."

"It's important who we pick as a mentor. Must have a collaborative person, willing to work with others. Someone who is reflective on her approaches. Someone highly qualified. Should not be required a lengthy time of experience.

The benefits of our mentoring program is district wide. We have common, planning time. A more consistent way. Our program is like a support group. It is very beneficial. The cons is that it is only one year. It should be extended. It will help with retention. Another problem: only one mentor. For one mentee. It should have multiple mentors.

Room for improvement: There is always room for improvement. It is part of the reflective process.

It is professional development for teachers. It does count to their hours.

When I first began, it was not an organized system. It was up to the teacher who had more time than me to be willing to help me and take me under his wings.

**Administrator 2**

As a mentee, I had a great experience with a mentoring program. As a mentor, I dealt with someone who had an issue taking suggestions. Therefore, I had both kind of experiences.

I know that we have experienced teachers who are assigned novice teachers. The mentoring program is that is in place to help teachers with a provisional certificate to receive mentoring for a year so they can be fully certified. The meetings in the program are periodic and they normally have a mentor with outstanding experience guiding them through it all.

The benefits of the program in place is that it gives beginners teachers the "nuts and bolts" of teaching: do's, do nots, of the teaching profession, such as classroom management, lesson planning, how to deal with difficult parents, how to deal with demanding administrators or difficult administrators. It is a good program. It gives them the chance to meet with more seasoned teachers, more experienced, more polished teachers and learn from them.

The drawback or "room for improvement" part is that this district is very transient. There are lots of interchangeable parts. "You can be in building A this year, next year will be B and the following will be C. It does not allow the stabilization or the use of the resources for a longer period. Our district has to get better at it.

Professional Development improvement: our district is generous toward professional development. I think, in general "we" (the district) give them the tools to be successful. It is up to the mentees to request further training. Most requests are approved.

Retention: "We are doing a decent job as a district trying to keep teachers in place, but the system is failing us". He said that new teachers in spite of the demands imposed on them by either the district or the state, they must remember this job happens to be a recession proof type of situation, where you can provide for your family while doing what they love. But they must love what they do. They just can't jump in without being passionate about their jobs."

## Administrator 3

Opinion about the mentoring program currently in place.

> *"The program in place is very collaborative, applying differentiated practices, they work together to tackle issues in general. I was seven years in another district and it was not collaborative. It was not sufficient to manage the need of a novice teacher. Especially classroom management. Common planning is not as common in other districts as it is in this district. In many places is a monthly gathering. In this district is a daily situation. As far as professional development is essential. They can come to the meeting and ask on how to implement a specific approach. So, it is a part of professional development."* (Participant18)

Retention: *"By year 5 we lose 30% of teachers. Inability to fulfill some roles, loss of state aid, loss of materials and technology. I would love to know that our mentoring program can retain teachers. We can work as hard as we want, but if the state does not provide us with necessary funds, we cannot support our teachers with all of the resources they need to reach every single student: technology, professional development workshops, etc."*

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS, BY QUESTION

**Q1** Can you describe your first day as a teacher and were you aware you would have a mentor?

**Mentee1.** The first day the mentee met the mentor only once. He wished he met him more time. He was too nervous. He neglected asking for more time. He regrets not asking for more help.

**Mentee2.** "Lucky I felt, since I have been doing long term replacements so I knew many things. But this is the first time I have my own class. Bazar day, very nervous. Surreal. I couldn't believe it was happening and then everything was great.

**Mentor 1.** "I'm looking back to 40 years. I was in Newark in the worst area possible. The issues at school was about drugs, weapons etc. There was no mentoring program in the school. No training whatsoever. In fact, in my first year of teaching I was never observed. I was however, lucky enough, to find some help in coworkers (whom I still keep touch).

I reported to work the first day and I was handed a sign and told to go to the picket line. I did this for two days. On the third day, I had a new contract.

**Mentee 3.** "The first day was nerve racking. I was supposed to be at a different school. I was hired at the last minute. I only had one or 2 meetings with my mentor. I was thrown into it. Very chaotic."
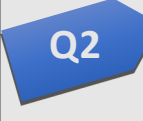
**Mentee 4.** "I was very nervous. I am alternate route. I am a behaviorist. I was overwhelmed to learn so many things like paper work regarding my students. Lots of paperwork. Nerve retching etc. Unfortunately, my mentor is not in the same school. Therefore, that plays a difficult role because I ca not just run next door and ask a question that just come up.

**Mentor2.** "My first day was terrifying. I do not remember knowing I was supposed to have help. Awful. I did not know if I was going to have some type of help or if I was supposed to buy my own materials. I had two good teachers next to me who helped me but I did not know what questions to ask. I was on my own. Nobody told me what to do. I was winging it. Found an empty classroom. What am I doing with these kids? I felt I did not have someone on my side telling me what to do. Entering into the room and finding just desks and chairs. I felt I was winging it. My mentor said come to me if you have any questions but I did not know what to ask.

**Mentor.** Excited, thrilled, vertigo. Getting in the class was everything. It was something I always wanted to do. Brought me back to 4th grade. She was telling me someday I would make a great teacher. It was scary but I felt now is the chance to do what I always wanted to do. Be a teacher. Felt that this was my second chance.

**Mentee.** I had a different perspective. I'm older. I had a background.

**Mentor.** It was in 1997, I think I cried. There was no mentoring program and I was a Special Education Teacher. Autistics. Pre-school specialized. No help at all. No materials, no toys just a good training before the school started. It would have been wonderful to have a "buddy" system or something like that.

**Q2** As a new teacher, what did you hope to have covered during the initial meeting with your mentor or mentee? What questions did you hope to have been answered in these meetings, which were not? (Mentees)

**Mentee1.** He wishes there was more clarity on how to deal with parents. College did not prepare him for that. He felt that because of their schedule the meeting times were not frequent. He wished for more common planning time.

**Mentor1.** I wish someone would have told me how to handle emotionally disturbed students. I had to learn everything as I went on my day. I learned on the job. It was trial and error. If I had any mentoring it was an informal situation through coworkers.

**Mentee2.** " I wish they would have giving me more information on the amount of paper work I had to complete by certain date: for example doc logs. I was surprised the amount of work I had to do and research from my pile of papers, emails etc.

I hoped someone would get me advice and helped me prioritize. How do I move on a regular day, how much time to spend on any subject? What works best for 4th grade? What kind of systems and procedures for this grade?

**Mentee3.** I teach 3 classes together. So, we have opportunity to work in all aspects.

**Mentee.** I'm new to teaching. So, all of the paperwork was overwhelming. Doc log. SGO's, PDP's. Always feeling I'm behind. Time consuming. That was the most important thing to be addressed at the beginning. But nobody told me how to go about it at the beginning. My mentor concentrated on the things I needed right away like IEP's reading and so forth. Even though things I had done. But I was always in a panic.

**Mentor2.** I wish I would have been told about procedures etc. I didn't know what questions to ask. It's not like now. We should know everything. Every single steps we do in the classroom. We should know. How do I set up my schedule?

**Mentor3.** While I was a mentee I wanted my mentor to make sure I was not going to fail. She covered what I wanted her to cover, what I needed. It was drilled in our heads that we needed to know curriculum. She covered what I always wanted to cover. 60 % of teachers fail because of class management. That was taught in college.

**Mentee5.** The biggest thing for me it was the MLP, SGO's, writing the IEP's.

**Mentor4.** How do I communicate with parents? Questions that have nothing to do with teaching but everything to do with it. What do I do when children cry?
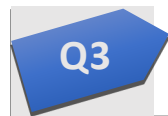
**Q3** Describe a typical meeting with your mentor or mentee. What were the topics covered? (Mentors and mentees)

**Mentee1.** Met every Tuesday after school. At the beginning, they covered topics relevant to their everyday life as a teacher: genesis, schoology etc. Lately procedures for testing.

**Mentor1.** I made sure he knew about procedures of every day teaching. How to present his lessons. We talked about behavioral issues, showed him, and talked to him about a reward system I use in my classroom.

**Mentee 2.** I am glad my mentor was next door and she was always willing to answer or meet with me. We met formally often and at the beginning, we talked about procedures, schedule and so forth.

What kind of material do you use when you teach long division? Resources.

**Mentee3.** "My mentor is in my classroom. I coteach with him. I do not think it could have been any better for me. We do not need formal meetings because we get to plan together and discuss daily what I need to do." WE had to figure out one lesson plan for each of the classes. He was helping with resource paper so I can do my doc log.

**Mentee5.** Lots of the meetings were via face time on the phone. It was mainly about the aides in the classroom. That was the most difficult situation. Dealing with the adults in the room. My mentor did help me about the staff and how to deal with them. What feedback do I give them? How do I change my aides if they are not working with certain students.

**Mentor2.** I'm lucky we are next to each other and we talk daily and get the chance to check in often. So I bring things up a lot about Doc log, schoology. Or he asks me if he is stuck.

**Mentor4.** As a mentor, which I love that role, I would ask what do they want from me., I would give them the floor. If it was awkward I would brought up what helped me as a teacher: dealing with parents. But dealing with parents it was an important to know how to do it. So, I would make sure I would encourage them to always call home.

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Lately I have not had a mentee but I am in the panel of the mentoring program.

**Mentee6.** I'm fortunate, I'm in touch with my mentor every day because we have the same schedule and common planning. Bouncing off ideas has been helpful. Very approachable.

**Mentor5.** How to handle the adults in the classroom like teachers aides. How to manage them. ABA program. I have 13 adults in the classroom that they don't teach you about.

**Q4** Goals of these questions: In the weeks following the initial meeting with your mentee or mentor have your impressions changed from the first meetings? If so, how? (mentors and mentees)

**Mentee1.** Definitely, things got better. As time went by, he felt more comfortable and less nervous. At the beginning, he did not know what questions to ask.

**Mentor1.** "I underestimated my mentee". He was not sure if he helped his mentee enough but he received validation when his mentee told him he was grateful for the information given.

**Mentee.** I felt a lot of information was given to me. At the end there was more because of the way we felt ( comfortable).

**Mentee.** My mentor checks with me regularly. She is being paid for it. So, I'm glad it occurs to her to call me. I ask for help when I need it now.

**Mentee.** It has been addressed before. Now I feel more comfortable than at the beginning as far as asking questions. She is always willing to share information.

**Q5** In your opinion what was not covered or discussed in your meetings that you wish it were? (mentees)

**Mentee1.** Again, he would have liked to know how to deal with parents in a professional way without sounding harsh.

**Mentee2.** " I wish they would have giving me the information of the doc logs a lot sooner. So, I'm not researching and finding materials at the end of the school year.

I felt ready to go. I had the tools. I met with my tutor every day for at least 10 minutes plus common planning.

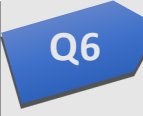I wished I was told about finalizing grades.

**Mentee3.** "The doc log information. Without a doubt

**Mentee4.** Paperwork, computer. Learning plan. Never seen it before. So, I could have used more information. That was difficult. Spent a great deal of time on SGO's.

**Mentor4.** I think at the beginning I was not sure at what level my mentee was and what was bringing to the table. He did bring a lot to the table. He had experience.

**Mentor.** Not always and the district knew it. District got into what was going on as far as why is not successful. So, they had to make more efficient. We found out what teachers wanted is time. They want time to work on doc logs, professional time to observe.

**Mentee.** Doc logs for sure. Getting some ideas on what to put in it would have been helpful. Suggestions etc.

**Q6** Jumping from the first day of class to now, how do you describe a day in your classroom? How much has it changed from the first day? And how much of that change it was due to mentoring? Or your own intuition? (Mentees)

**Mentee 1.** He liked how his mentor used the reward system with his students. He decided to do the same in his class for behavior issues. And it's working. He felt minimizes behavior issues in the class.

Now we are going more on my own intuition. I do more of my own things. At the beginning it was just the way it was giving to me.

**Mentee3.** Now we flow. At the beginning it was different.

**Mentee.** I think it's very different from the first day. I don't think it has do with mentoring. It has to do with me feeling comfortable with my position. This is my profession. I demand respect now. Different from the beginning. They all made progress (all students). It was a good year. At times I had to use educational control and re assess the situation with my aides but now I do it with more confidence.

**Mentor.** As a mentee I wish I would have been given a list to cover. As a mentor, I wish I had had a list ready for them to use throughout the year.

**Mentee.** Combination of both. Subbing helped me a great deal. I'm confident I can do this. This is possible. Classroom management. There is no better way of preparing than just doing it. Build on that confidence.

**Q7** Thinking back as your first day as a teacher, is it anything you wish you have known then but you were not told? (What is the most valuable piece of information you wish you would have had on your first day as a teacher?) Question for mentor: Do you wish you would have given certain information but you did not? Anything you feel you missed in your first meeting?

**Mentee.** He wishes he would have known what kind of materials were available to him.

**Mentor.** "Truly, I was not sure I was the right person for the mentee. I questioned myself Am I going to help him. Am I worthy of the opportunity given to me?

I was told at the beginning I had to tell the adults I am the boss. I did not realize how difficult it would be. I have more control. Being worn the adults were the most difficult part of my job.

I wish I would have pressed about classroom management. He struggles with. It should have been sooner. At the beginning, it's the time to take care of behavior. It's ok not to be their friends. Structured. In a routine. From the beginning. Setting procedures early.

**Mentor.** I knew what to do. I had experience with my own kids. Relationship with parents first. Making sure parents knew they can call anytime was important. I'm more confident.

Important information: I wish I would be more relaxed. I was very stressed

Getting the information about IEP's.

**Mentor.** I wish I would have known that if the first day is awful is Ok. It's not the end of the world.

**Q8** Any advice to anyone starting to teach tomorrow? What advice would it be? (Mentors and mentees)

**Mentee.** Don't be afraid to ask questions

**Mentor.** Positive attitude and accept the unexpected.

**Mentee.** Be ready today to start tomorrow.

**Mentee.** Take a deep breath. You will get through it. Take it all in. Plan. Organize and ask as many questions as you can possible ask.

**Mentee.** The hardest thing is leaving the work at work. Not bringing anything home. So guess separating both. School from work.

**Mentor.**   Is tougher than they think. They should make priority. Not easy.

**Mentor.**   If they are genuine about their calling let, they know you are for them. Be yourself. Ask them if there is something your child would know about you. Assure them you are there for them.

**Mentee.**   If you can sub, please do it. Be in a classroom. It's a great experience. If you have 60 credits get into a classroom. Substitute teacher is better preparation than student teaching.

**Mentor.**   Don't worry if things don't go smoothly on the first day.

**Q9**  This question is strictly for mentors: Can you compare programs of today versus the one you experienced when you began? Was it in New Jersey?

**Mentor.**   I had nothing. No Department head, no coordinator, only coworkers.

**Q10**  Retention

**Mentor.**   I am not sure if we are getting enough information. It should be more realistic.

Long time ago we put a manual for new teachers. It should be a lifeline for new teachers. If the lesson is tanking what do I do? Something should be in place for new teachers to use in case of emergency.

**Mentor.**   They are not getting enough support. Seems like a business. Must be in the same school, same schedule. Quality time.

Confidentiality is the most important thing you can offer your mentee. Whatever they tell you. Unless is something dangerous. Nobody should know about what you know about the new teacher.

Important for the administrator to match the mentor with the mentee. Same field. Must be a veteran. Not less than 10 years.

**Mentor.**   Same building if that is possible. I did not think what they planned to be helpful, just give us common planning time t discuss questions. Questions about back to school, conferences, SGO's, etc.

APPENDIX D

MENTOR/NOVICE TEACHER MONTHLY CHECKLISTS

Mentoring, when done effectively, creates a partnership between two individuals—the mentor and the novice teacher. The goal of the mentoring program is to provide support for the novice teacher and allow him or her to have an opportunity to meet with his or her mentor and discuss/share successes and concerns, and pinpoint areas for improvement. As a mentor, we hope that you will experience enhanced leadership skills, renewed growth, and the satisfaction that you made a difference for a beginning teacher in your advice and support. The monthly checklist will provide a beginning dialogue on specific topics for your meetings. Please remember that all meetings between the mentor and novice teacher are confidential.

**Mentor Expectations**

❏ Arrange for one meeting between the mentor and novice teacher per week for the first four weeks of school.

❏ Begin a contact log (required) to record all meetings and contact between the mentor and novice teacher.

❏ Assist the teacher in preparing for the first day of school.

❏ Assist teacher with behavior management and planning.

❏ Share knowledge about lesson planning, useful classroom materials, long-short term planning strategies, curriculum development, and teaching methods.

❏ Help the novice teacher learn to meet the procedural demands of the school.

❏ Provide moral and emotional support and function as a sounding board for new ideas.

❏ Provide access to other classrooms so teachers can observe their colleagues and begin to know and understand the different models of teaching that can exist within a school.

❏ Help teachers understand the implications of student diversity for teaching and learning as defined in 6A:3-3.3 Professional Standards for Teachers.

❏ Engage first-year teachers in self-assessment and reflection on their own practice.

❏ Provide support and professional feedback as novice teachers experiment with new ideas and strategies.

## Novice Teacher Expectations

❏ Use active listening skills during discussions with your mentor. Take notes when appropriate and ask questions.

❏ Receive feedback in a positive attitude. Your mentor will provide honest feedback to you and accept it as an opportunity to strengthen and improve your potential as a teacher

❏ Let your mentor know that you have followed advice and/or suggestions, even if you have modified the suggestions. Pointing out that you used your mentor's help and sharing outcomes is very important in the mentor relationship. Appreciate the mentor's knowledge and expertise.

❏ Honor each other's' time. Be prepared to ask for specific guidance and advice. The more specific you can be, the easier it will be for your mentor to support you. The mentor/novice teacher beginning of the school year exchange more than likely has already occurred, so for the months of August and September, check off the boxes that you have already done and/or discussed and complete any areas on the list.

**August/September**

❏ Introduce yourself to the novice teacher and introduce your novice teacher to staff members in your building (nurse, counselor, department heads, team leaders, etc.)

❏ Review VTEA Contract with the Vernon Board of Education

❏ Take a tour of the building/area

❏ Show location of materials (stapler, construction paper, etc.)

❏ Share checkout procedures for books, materials, etc.

❏ Tour teacher workroom: supplies, copy machine procedures, etc.

❏ Debrief staff/team/department meetings

❏ Review assigned duties and responsibilities for each duty

❏ Share teacher dress code (dress down day policy)

❏ Discuss and share grade level/content area daily class schedule

❏ Review assigned duties and responsibilities for each day

❏ Share lesson plan expectations and example of weekly plan, discuss and show Oncourse lesson planning tool.

❏ Discuss and/or assist in developing Professional Development Plan (The PDP must be completed within 30 Instructional days after beginning teaching assignments)

❏ Introduce and show My Learning Plan, review signing up for professional development classes, submitting and accepting pre/post observations, entering Professional Development Plan (PDP), etc.

❏ Introduce substitute procedures and AESOP website

❏ Introduce PowerSchool and review the website for confidential medical and personal information

❏ Read all important documents (located in cumulative folders) such as Individualized Education Plans (IEP), 504 plans, etc.

❏ Discuss any beginning of the year assessments that need to be administered. Start discussion of Student Growth Objectives (SGOs) and/or Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)

❏ Share first day/week activities- provide guidance on organizing first day and first week

❏ Discuss Back to School Night procedures and share agenda/presentation ideas

❏ Review testing dates, administration procedures, etc.

❏ Discuss/share opening announcement procedures and expectations

❏ Review procedures (attendance, tardies, lunch count)

❏ Discuss arrival/dismissal procedures

❏ Discuss playground, cafeteria, hallway rules according to assignment

❏ Discuss student dress code and procedures when a refraction occurs

❏ Discuss school holiday/function policies (parties, dances, food, activities) and best practice for these events

❏ Share building forms (nurse, hall pass, office, etc.)

❏ Stress the importance of reading school Communiques and keeping current with the upcoming events

❏ Review procedures for all emergency drills ❏ Discuss procedure for snow day/delayed starts/extreme weather

❏ Remember to attend Mentor/Novice teacher workshops- dates will be provided

❏ Set up scheduled times to meet as mentor/novice teacher each month

❏ Review procedures for all emergency drills List below any other items discussed in your meetings:


Comments:



Mentor Signature _____ Date _____



Novice Teacher Signature _____ Date _____

**October**

❑ Share how teaching is going.

❑ Review homework policy and share ideas regarding assignment submission by students.

❑ Go over student make-up work policies.

❑ Discuss upcoming or completed observations by administrative staff.

❑ Discuss understanding of how to write weekly lesson plans that are data driven and focus on student learning.

❑ Discuss Oncourse and answer any questions (refer to your building Oncourse rep).

❑ Discuss concerns about students who might be struggling and identify possible interventions.

❑ Clarify and discuss any points made at faculty, team, grade/department level meetings.

❑ Share grading guidelines.

❑ Review grade book and record keeping system.

❑ Discuss communicating with parents, tips for upcoming Parent/Teacher conferences.

❑ Discuss any potential difficult conferences and suggest support personnel that might attend the conference.

❑ Review parent communications, open house, etc.

❑ Set up scheduled times to meet as mentor/novice teacher. List below any other items discussed in your meetings:


Comments:


Mentor Signature _____ Date _____



Novice Teacher Signature _____Date _____

**November**

❏ Share and bring each other up-to-date what has been happening in your classroom

❏ Review monthly district/building activities

❏ Discuss formal observation(s) or upcoming observations

❏ Examine/discuss classroom management/discipline plan and maintaining class control

❏ Informal observation of each other's' classroom teaching (confidential) sometime between November and December. Provide feedback to each other what you observed in the classroom.

❏ Answer questions about unknown terms or unclear processes. Be prepared to explain the rationale for or history behind comments/decisions.

❏ Start identifying students needing accommodations and review I&RS (Intervention and Referral Services) paperwork and procedures

❏ Discuss school holiday/function policies (parties, dances, food, activities) and best practice for these events

❏ Review report card system in PowerSchool and how report cards will be distributed to parents

❏ Continue discussion on parent/teacher conferences and tips in how to conduct

❏ Set up scheduled times to meet as mentor/novice teacher. List below any other items discussed in your meetings:


Comments:


Mentor Signature _____ Date _____


Novice Teacher Signature _____ Date _____

## December

❏ Share and bring each other up-to-date what has been happening in your classroom.

❏ Discuss upcoming observations and formal observations, walk-throughs, etc.

❏ Discuss concerns/successes of students.

❏ Discuss parent communication.

❏ Appraise instructional pacing.

❏ Share "tricks of the trade."

❏ Observe and discuss informal observations of colleagues. Review mentor/novice teacher meeting log Comments:


Mentor Signature _____Date _____


Novice Teacher Signature _____ Date _____

**January**

❏ Discuss upcoming observations and formal observations, walk-through, etc.

❏ Discuss mid-year assessment procedures and SGO revisions if needed.

❏ Review and edit Documentation Logs, discuss artifacts to be included.

❏ Continue informal observations of each other and colleagues.

❏ Reflect on the first half of the school year.

❏ Contact parents of struggling students. List below any other items discussed:


Mentor Signature _____ Date _____



Novice Teacher Signature _____ Date _____

**February**

❏ Review and adjust SGOs prior to February 15.

❏ Discuss upcoming observations and formal observations, walk-throughs, etc.

❏ Discuss how to prepare students for upcoming testing. List below any other items discussed:


Comments: Mentor Signature _____ Date _____


Novice Teacher Signature _____ Date _____

## March

❏ Discuss upcoming testing (state or district testing, etc.) for requirements and procedures.

❏ Discuss learning resources to suggest to parents when ask how they can help support their student's learning.

❏ Review confidentiality policy of information.

❏ Discuss finalizing the documentation log and what to expect in a summative evaluation.


Mentor Signature _____ Date _____


Novice Teacher Signature _____ Date _____

# April

❏ Review testing schedule, testing procedures and suggestions for conducive testing environment.

❏ Review accommodations for designated state and district testing students prior to testing dates.

❏ Become aware of professional organizations in your discipline or area of interest.

❏ Look for upcoming workshops, classes, professional development opportunities.

❏ Introduce and discuss field trip policies (if applicable).

❏ Attend Final Summative Evaluation meeting (Should occur by the end of 30th week).

Comments:


Mentor Signature _____ Date _____


Novice Teacher Signature _____ Date _____

**May/June**

❏ Discuss end of the school year events and procedures as they arise (field days, field trips, end of the year check-out procedures)

❏ Review cumulative folder procedures

❏ Consider ideas for the last weeks of school that engage students in meaningful activities

❏ Explain rehiring practices and contracts

❏ Suggest tips for packing up the classroom

❏ Submit Mentoring Log to your building principal

❏ Save checklist for your file

❏ Review school year highlights, successes and challenges

❏ Celebrate a successful school year! Comments:



Mentor Signature _____ Date _____


Novice Teacher _____ Date _____ -



---Adapted from: *Teacher Evaluation: To Enhance Professional Practice* (ASCD) by Danielson and McGreal, 2000