2008

An Examination of the Experiences of Nine Novice Principals Who Were Participants in New Jersey's Revised Monitoring Program

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF NINE NOVICE PRINCIPALS WHO WERE PARTICIPANTS IN NEW JERSEY'S REVISED MENTORING PROGRAM

BY

JOHN C. ANZUL

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education
Seton Hall University

2008
ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF NINE NOVICE PRINCIPALS WHO WERE PARTICIPANTS IN NEW JERSEY’S REVISED MENTORING PROGRAM

The purpose of the study was to document the reported experiences of nine beginning principals who participated in New Jersey’s mentoring program revised in 2005, in order to gain a better understanding of this aspect of the professional education of school leaders. New changes to the program included an additional year, completion of eight explorations, and an action-research project. The issues examined here are based on contextual factors that Samier (2000) derived from Kram (1985) and Gehrke (1988). A partial list of these, that are applicable to New Jersey’s mentoring program for school leaders, includes: opportunity for individual selection of mentor; sufficient time to develop relationship; opportunity to negotiate goals and activities; accommodation to unique mentor and protégé styles; opportunities for relationship-building activities; and privacy and confidentiality.

The primary research method was the qualitative in-depth interview. Responses were analyzed to determine commonalities and differences between the perceived experiences of the protégés in relationship to the presence or absence of the various contextual factors within their relationships, for the purpose of identifying common themes. The data are presented thematically, grouped according to the contextual factors.

The findings predominantly support previous research in this area regarding the importance of the contextual factors in building of productive relationships between
mentors and protégés. Those protégés who perceived that the factors were generally present within their relationships also expressed the highest level of satisfaction with most aspects of their mentoring experiences. Those protégés who perceived that the factors were generally not present within their relationships also reported a corresponding level of dissatisfaction with various aspects of their mentoring experiences.

Suggested implications include: an improved method for matching of mentors to protégés based on similar professional experience, and similar student populations; greater participation by protégés in designing the assigned goals and activities; improved training for mentors so they better understand the importance of including the contextual factors within their mentoring relationships; and allowing universities to have input into the formation and implementation of this program.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

John Milton wrote, "Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinions in good men is but knowledge in the making." This dissertation is a product of collaboration. It would not have come into being at all if it were not for the input, suggestions, and critiques of many friends, colleagues and mentors.

First and foremost I would like to thank my advisor and mentor, Dr. Anthony Colella. Throughout all of the years of coursework his advice was to always steer every assignment in the direction of a dissertation. That suggestion was of enormous help in keeping me focused on my goal. His continual patience, encouragement and support convinced me that this was a project I really could complete. I took every class I could with Dr. Colella because his vision of what education could be was a continual inspiration. Over a period of nearly fifteen years, and numerous courses, he has been a teacher and a friend whose kindness has made all of the work a joyful experience.

I met Dr. Rebecca Cox at Seton Hall, when she was acting as one of the teachers of a dissertation seminar. It was during that course, and because of her guidance, that I found the research that eventually became the lead article for this dissertation. Throughout all of the stages of this study she has continually challenged me with the tough questions that forced me to re-evaluate and re-think my work. Her insightfulness has been an invaluable help to me, first in finding my topic, then in shaping it, writing up the research, and in revising and refining this dissertation.
One of the very first conversations that I had with Dr. Drucilla Clark was about the importance of integrity to our profession. That was when I was sure that she was a colleague who shared my vision of what a school could become, and how to steer it there. During the years we worked together she always made me feel like an equal partner in a grand adventure, and at the same time she was a model for me of what a school leader should be; and I have tried to emulate her example ever since moving to a school of my own. When Dr. Clark earned her doctorate, shortly after we started working together, she immediately started to push me to get back to work on own degree. Therefore, it seemed only fitting that she should continue to be a guide and advisor by serving on my committee.

The first time that I had the privilege of working with Dr. Judith McVarish was when I was invited to contribute a brief description of one of our school programs to her book. When it was suggested to me that she would be interested in working on a qualitative study such as mine, it seemed like a natural fit. Her input during the writing of my findings has been a significant factor in making it much more accessible. During the course of this study her warmth, encouragement and advice have been a great help to me in creating a readable text.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to my mother, Dr. Margaret Anzul. She has been a constant source of encouragement, by always helping me to keep the work on track and moving forward. In addition, because of her knowledge of qualitative studies she has provided me with a great deal of invaluable editorial advice and guidance.
Grateful acknowledgement is also due to Dr. Eugenie Samier, who wrote the lead article for this study. I was very fortunate that she was willing to take time to send e-mails and to speak with me on the phone about her work. Her gracious cooperation and advice as one of my Jury of Experts was a great help in creating my Interview Instrument. I also am indebted to my other experts: Dr. Judy Mertz and Mr. Bill Owens.

Many thanks are also extended to all of my colleagues in Denville and Parsippany. Not only have I learned a great deal from both of these teams of administrators and teachers, but I have also been the beneficiary of much warmth and support throughout the course of this study.

Finally, I owe more than I could ever express to my wife Ann, and our five children: Jack, Caty, Faith, Mary and Laura. Your support was always there, but I am most grateful for all the time you sacrificed to allow me to complete this work.

If, through all of this, we have "made some knowledge" that will help shape better school leaders, then the time and energies of all of these friends, colleagues, and family members will have been well spent.
DEDICATION

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” - William Butler Yeats

This work is lovingly dedicated to my entire family, because you have all helped to kindle this fire:

To my parents, Margaret and Clement, who first inspired me with a love of learning that I have carried with me through all of my adult life.

To my brother, Mark, who has always been a good and loyal friend.

To my children: Jack, Caty, Faith, Mary and Laura. Each of you is at an important point in your own education. Your positive attitudes; your dedication to your own studies, and the enthusiasm with which each of you embraces newly discovered ideas, is always my inspiration. One of my primary motivations has been the hope that school could always be a place of wonder for each of you.

To my wife, Ann, who has always been my best friend and most loyal supporter, I could have never completed this work without you. After all the time you gave up to allow me to finish this, it is as much yours as mine.
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Chapter I

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Introduction

One of the first known times that the concept of mentoring is mentioned in Western literature is in Homer’s *Odyssey*. Before he departs Ithaca for Troy, Ulysses asks his friend Mentor to act as a surrogate to his son Telemachus while he is away. But he makes clear that he defines the role not as that of a parent, and not just as a counselor, but also as a guardian and guide. Mentor, along with the goddess Athena, assists the young prince in coping with the many challenges he faces during his father’s absence (Malone, 2001; Samier, 2000). An important aspect of the mentor’s task is to work together with the protégé in order to create a unique relationship that is intensive and professionally satisfying to both parties. Numerous researchers have identified various types of mentors. Phillips-Jones (1982) identifies six, including sponsors, coaches, “godparents,” professional mentors, patrons and advisors. Missirian (1982) and Schapiro (1978) draw distinctions between sponsors and mentors based primarily upon the level of engagement and the amount of time invested in the relationship.

Numerous professions have adopted some form of apprenticeship as a required component of training before one is considered to have become a “master craftsman.” During the past 25 years or more, a great deal of research on school leadership examined whether mentoring was a desirable addition to the training of aspiring principals. John Daresh and Marsha Playko (1995; 1996), Martha Bruckner (2001), Pamela Matters
(1994), Gary Crow and Joseph Matthews (1998), and Robert Malone (2001) are just a handful of the writers who have argued for the inclusion of mentoring in the preparation of school leaders. Daresh and Playko (1996) point out that the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) sponsored a study of preparation models for school administrators that support the use of mentors. They also cite the formation of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the creation of the Journal of School Leadership, both of which have generated much additional research supporting the mentoring of beginning principals.

The Problem

Required formal mentoring programs for beginning principals, of one type or another, have been in existence in many states throughout the country for approximately 30 years (Malone, 2001; Samier, 2000). Such programs may be seen as part of an overall trend toward the implementation of collaborative settings not only for student learning but also for the induction and development of faculty and administrators (Fullan, 2001 a). The Albuquerque, NM school district now offers their senior principals a $1000.00 a year stipend if they volunteer to act as mentors to beginning principals. Protégés in that program have noted that because the mentors are being paid they have felt a greater comfort level in asking numerous questions of their peers (Curtis, 2005).

California requires a mentoring component as part of the credentialing process, which is called: Coaching Leaders to Attain Student Success (CLASS). This program distinguishes between mentors and coaches. Mentors are defined as senior organizational insiders in job-alike positions. Coaches are outsiders who are professional leaders, and who are also paid leadership coaches (Bloom, Castagna and Warren, 2004).
We suggest that novice principals should have a mentor as a source of advice and information regarding district matters. In addition, novice (and perhaps all) principals need an external coach as a source of confidential and expert support around the wide-ranging, problematic and often deeply personal issues that they must deal with from their first days on the job (p. 1).

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) responded to the trend towards mentoring by establishing a unique forum in which a beginning principal would pose a question once a month, which is printed in their journal, *Principal*. Readers are asked to send replies to the question, which are then printed in the next issue.

A few examples of mentoring programs for principals that have been studied by researchers are Albuquerque, NM Public Schools’ Extra Support for Principals (ESP) program that originated in 1994 (Weingartner, 2001), The Southern Regional Education Board’s Leadership Academy (Crews & Weakley, 1996), and the Santa Cruz, CA “Growing Our Own” program (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001). The popularity of this form of professional training is also evident in studies of practices in other countries. Mentoring programs are cited favorably in a study of a principal’s training program recently developed in Belgium (Ballet, Vanderberghe, & Kelchtermans, 2000), and in a comparative study of programs in the United Kingdom and Singapore (Coleman, Low, Bush, & Chew, 1996). Other studies have compared mentoring programs for beginning principals to the mentoring relationships in other professions (Daresh & Playko, 1996), or have analyzed the responsibilities of the participants in mentoring relationships (Daresh
& Playko, 1995). The purpose of the present study was to explore the experiences of beginning principals in the current mentoring program in New Jersey.

During the last several years the process for obtaining a principal’s license in New Jersey has evolved a good deal. Approximately 6 years ago the State used a program called the Principal’s Assessment Center. Participants spent a day engaged in activities that mirrored typical job functions, while being observed by a panel that was made up of retired superintendents. The panel used their observations to compile a document which was intended to highlight the beginner’s strengths and weaknesses. That document was then to be used as a starting point by the new administrator and his or her mentor, as they engaged in a year-long process of increasing strengths and providing new experiences, in all of the critical areas outlined in the NJ Professional Standards for School Leaders (NJ 6A: 9 – 3.4). At that time mentors were assigned by the beginning principal’s district superintendent. Although the document was intended to serve as a roadmap for the mentor, some aspiring principals reported that they felt uncomfortable in sharing these with mentors who were also colleagues, working in the same district. Approximately 4 years ago the Assessment Center component was eliminated and aspiring principals were asked to complete the one-year mentoring component only.

On May 24, 2005, then Commissioner of Education, William Librera, released a letter to all chief school administrators, in which he announced that the State was partnering with the Foundation for Educational Administration (FEA) to revise the licensure process for principals. Librera referenced the fact that in December of 2003 the State Board of Education adopted the National Standards for School Leaders developed by the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The ISLLC Standards
have now been adopted by the Council of Chief State School Officers, and are published electronically at their website, CCSSO.org. Those standards are as follows:

Standard 1
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community (p. 10).

Standard 2
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth (p. 12).

Standard 3
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment (p. 14).

Standard 4
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources (p. 16).
Standard 5

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner (p. 18).

Standard 6

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context (p. 20).

In January of 2004 a State Advisory Committee was established under the auspices of the Principals and Supervisors Association (PSA/FEA) in order to review the guidelines in use at that time and to make recommendations for revisions. One of those recommendations, as stated on their website, was that Standard Principal Certification would include “high quality, intensive and sustained mentoring and support for all new school leaders across the State to improve induction and retention” (PSA/FEA, n.d.). In January of 2005 the NJ Department of Education approved the revisions recommended by the Advisory Committee. According to the PSA/FEA website the new program, as designed by the FEA, has changed the mentoring requirement for beginning principals from a 1-year program to a 2-year program. In addition, a number of new guidelines have recently been established by the PSA/FEA that lay out all of the steps the mentor and protégé should follow during that time. These guidelines include experiences in all of the critical areas outlined in the six NJ Professional Standards for School Leaders, including Curriculum, Ethics, Technology and Strategic Management, among others. In addition, the PSA/FEA took all six of the Technology Standards for School Administrators (TSSA) and merged them into two additional areas of concentration for aspiring principals. The
TSSA Collaborative consists of several groups including: The American Association of School Administrators, The National Association of Secondary School Principals, The National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the National School Boards Association. The Technology Standards, as listed on their website, are:

I. Leadership and Vision: Educational leaders inspire a shared vision for comprehensive integration of technology and foster an environment and culture conducive to the realization of that vision.

II. Learning and Teaching: Educational leaders ensure that curricular design, instructional strategies, and learning environments integrate appropriate technologies to maximize learning and teaching.

III. Productivity and Professional Practice: Educational leaders apply technology to enhance their professional practice and to increase their own productivity and that of others.

IV. Support, Management, and Operations: Educational leaders ensure the integration of technology to support productive systems for learning and administration.

V. Assessment and Evaluation: Educational leaders use technology to plan and implement comprehensive systems of effective assessment and evaluation.

VI. Social, Legal, and Ethical Issues: Educational leaders understand the social, legal, and ethical issues related to technology and model responsible decision-making related to these issues. (pp. 6-7)
According to the PSA/FEA's Leader-to-Leader website, in year one of the residency program the aspiring principal is required to complete explorations in the following areas:

Exploration #1
Exploring the District/School vision for student learning.

Exploration #2
Exploring the culture and environment for learning within the school and classrooms.

Exploration #3
Exploring the school's curriculum and classroom instruction through analysis of student performance data.

Exploration #4
Exploring the connection of the school to families and the larger community in promoting academic achievement of all students.

Exploration #5
Exploring the impact of integrity, fairness, and ethical behavior in promoting the academic achievement of all students.

Exploration #6
Exploring the political, social, economic, legal and cultural context in promoting the academic achievement of all students.

Exploration #7
Exploring technology to enhance personal and staff productivity, and student learning.
Exploration #8

Exploring strategic school management and operations to support student learning. (PSA/FEA, n.d., ¶2)

In addition, The PSA/FEA Leader-to-Leader website also states that in the second year of the residency program the aspiring principal is required to complete a “Job-embedded Action Research Report” and to demonstrate continued growth in the ISLLC and NJ Professional Standards for School Leaders (PSA/FEA, n.d., ¶2).

Before the PSA/FEA guidelines were established, it had generally been assumed that either the district, or the principal and his mentor, would design a program and would create the rules by which the mentoring relationship was to operate. This researcher attended the Assessment Center, in the spring of 2002, conducted by the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association. During that session numerous references were made by participants regarding their mentoring experiences and several individuals stated that many of these experiences were unsatisfying or unproductive. PSA leaders who were present responded that they had received many similar complaints, and that they were concerned that this component of the program seemed to have many problems. Perhaps in response to some of those complaints the State Department of Education is now requiring all first-time mentors to go through a 3-day training program before they start working with their protégés.

The PSA/FEA Leaders-to-Leaders website lists the following requirements for those who wish to become a mentor:

1. Eligible mentors are retired school leaders and currently employed school leaders who hold New Jersey standard principal certification and have at least
five (5) years of experience as principal and/or director in New Jersey public
schools.

2. All mentors must be able to communicate electronically via e-mail and
download documents from the NJ-L2L website, and also have ready access to a
computer.

3. All eligible mentors must complete three (3) days of State-required NJ-L2L
mentor training, with an additional day of training prior to beginning year two
of mentoring. (PSA/FEA, n.d., ¶1-2)

Despite the fact that the State Department of Education has addressed some of the
weaknesses in previous licensing programs for principals, a number of issues remain
regarding whether the length of the new program is either too short or too long; whether
the mentors are adequately trained, and how they are selected and matched to the
protégés; whether the revised Explorations and the Action Research Project are well
structured learning tools, or overly similar to university training; and whether this more
formalized 2-year mentoring program is a satisfying, productive and useful experience
for the protégé.

The Significance of The Study

Researchers who have examined mentoring programs have generally found that
the most successful experiences were those in which the beginning principal and the
mentor establish a relationship of trust (Bruckner, 2001; Grover, 1994). Equally essential
is that the mentoring program should be one in which there is both an opportunity for a
good deal of interaction, as well as for self-reflection on the part of both participants
(Daresh, 1996; Mann, 1998; Matters, 1994).
The amount of time spent in a mentoring relationship has been examined by a
number of researchers. Several of these researchers (Clawson, 1986; Kram, 1985;
Missirian, 1982; Samier, 2000) discuss stages similar to that of the medieval
apprenticeship that evolve from apprentice to journeyman to the level of master. While
all of them identify slightly different time frames, from 2 years up to 10 years and above,
they all agree that the first 6 to 12 months is a purely formative stage of the relationship,
in which the participants are just beginning to build a degree of trust.

Another highly important aspect of mentoring is whether it is part of a planned
program, established as a requirement towards the completion of any form of certification
or licensing. Zey (1989) examined mentoring programs established within public
administration programs, as well as private sector mentoring programs, and found that a
number of factors caused formalized mentoring programs to be unsuccessful. The
greatest problems cited were lack of time for contact between the mentor and the
protégée, and the lack of choice that protégés had in selecting their mentor.

Samier (2000) points out some practical concerns about formalized mentoring
programs. She argues that a number of “contextual factors” need to be present in a
mentoring relationship, including the ability to have some choice in the selection process,
reciprocity and open dialogue, and a sufficient period of time in which to develop a
relationship, among others.

A search of the literature has found no studies that have looked at the experiences
of beginning principals in New Jersey since the changeover process began, or who are
now in the 2-year mentoring program. This researcher was interested in learning about
the experiences of 9 beginning principals who have participated in mentoring programs
since the State changed its requirements, whether they felt that this change has made a significant difference in their professional development, and how in general they characterized their experiences. The study was designed within the qualitative paradigm as an open ended, in-depth interview study. A qualitative interview study would be a method of choice for exploring experiences from the perspectives of participants (Kvale, 1996; Mishler, 1986; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Seidman, 1998). The significance of a study such as this one is based upon the need to better understand how a mandated requirement, such as New Jersey’s current 2-year long mentoring program, can be implemented in such a way as to be productive and successful for the participants.

The Purpose of The Study

The purpose of the study was to document the reported experiences of 9 beginning principals who participated in New Jersey’s revised mentoring program, in order to gain a better understanding of this aspect of the professional education of school leaders. Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted to examine the protégés’ responses to questions regarding the current program. The issues examined here are based on contextual factors that Samier (2000) derived from Kram (1985) and Gehrke (1988). A partial list of these, that are applicable to New Jersey’s mentoring program for school leaders, includes:

A. Opportunities for contact and individual choice in selection of each other, particularly across hierarchical and departmental boundaries.

B. Sufficient time to develop the relationship (two to five years).

C. Regulations and procedures allowing them to negotiate goals and activities.
D. Accommodation of the diversity and uniqueness of mentor and protégé in styles of thinking and working, in order that the mentor can create experiences tailored to the unique vision of professional practice, especially those facilitating collaboration and alliances.

E. Opportunities to engage in relationship-building activities, especially in developing dialogue.

F. Privacy and confidentiality in the relationship to address non-organizational issues in the protégé’s life, and disclose problems (pp. 93-94).

The Research Question

The primary research question for the study was: What are the reported experiences of 9 beginning principals who are involved in mentoring relationships as part of their professional education as school leaders? Sub-questions included the following:

1. How have the following six of Samier’s contextual factors affected these mentoring relationships?

   A. Opportunities for contact and individual choice in selection of each other, particularly across hierarchical and departmental boundaries.

   B. Sufficient time to develop the relationship (two to five years).

   C. Regulations and procedures allowing them to negotiate goals and activities.

   D. Accommodation of the diversity and uniqueness of mentor and protégé in styles of thinking and working, in order that the mentor can create experiences tailored to the unique vision of professional practice, especially those facilitating collaboration and alliances.
E. Opportunities to engage in relationship-building activities, especially in developing dialogue.

F. Privacy and confidentiality in the relationship to address non-organizational issues in the protégé’s life, and disclose problems

2. What changes to the current program, if any, would the protégés suggest?

Description of the Study

A series of interview questions was designed that were intended to elicit reflections on various aspects of the contextual factors identified by Samier (2000), in order to determine whether the factors were actually necessary or relevant for successful mentoring relationships, within the context of New Jersey’s revised program. Over a period of 5 months the researcher conducted interviews with 9 beginning principals who were either just finishing, or who were nearing the end of the second year of their mentoring programs. The data gathered during these interviews was used to analyze the experiences of these beginning principals, in order to determine whether the presence or absence of the contextual factors caused these mentoring relationships to be either more or less successful or productive.

Limitations of The Study

Several limitations are inherent in this study and are acknowledged as follows:

This study is limited to the responses and perceptions of beginning principals who have only had 1 to 2 years in this role since the State Department of Education made changes to the mentoring requirement.

This study is limited to the responses and perceptions of school administrators in New Jersey public schools.
This study is limited to 9 beginning principals in New Jersey.

This study is limited to the possible personal and professional biases of respondents due to their own life experiences or training regarding mentoring relationships.

This study is limited to the chosen form of methodology, as the data chosen is that which is of interest to the researcher.

This study is limited to the sample size of interviewees.

This study is limited to the specific list of questions designed by the researcher.

This study is limited to the analysis of responses and perceptions of respondents by the researcher.

Definition of Terms

*Mentor:* For the purpose of this study the term applies specifically to those experienced school leaders who have participated in New Jersey’s training program for new mentors. These individuals will have also been appointed by the State Department of Education to guide the continuing professional development of a beginning principal during the past year or more since the program was revised.

*Protégé:* For the purpose of this study the term applies specifically to a beginning principal whose continuing professional development a State Department of Education-appointed, and State Department of Education-trained, mentor has guided during the past year or more since the program was revised.

*State:* For the purpose of this study the term is used to refer to the New Jersey State Department of Education and the PSA/FEA Leader-to-Leader training program for aspiring principals.
Organization of the Study

The study consists of five chapters:

Chapter I is an introduction to the study. It contains historical data on the mentoring of beginning principals. In addition to general information about this method of providing new school administrators with training, it also looks specifically at how this method has been applied in the state of New Jersey. It also contains a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study and the research questions. Additional sections in this chapter outline a description of the study, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study and the outline of the study.

Chapter II provides a review of the literature related to the background of mentoring programs in general and the findings of any related studies. It also includes a discussion of the development of a mentoring program in New Jersey, and an overview of studies, a discussion of research on successful mentoring programs, including "Contextual Elements" such as choice of mentor and time spent on developing the mentoring relationship.

Chapter III is the Research and Methodology section. It includes a discussion of data collection, treatment of data and analysis of data, along with a description of the research participants, and the interview questions.

Chapter IV presents the findings of the study through the interview responses of the study participants.

Chapter V, entitled Summary and Conclusions, presents an interpretive summary of the study, draws conclusions related to the experiences of protégés and mentors who
have participated in New Jersey's revised mentoring program, and contains recommendations for further study and research.

A list of references and appropriate appendices will follow Chapter V.
Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to document the reported experiences of nine beginning principals who are participating in New Jersey’s revised mentoring program, in order to gain a better understanding of this aspect of the professional education of school leaders. Chapter II will present the relevant literature as it applies to the varying perceptions about what type of training is required for well-prepared principals in general, and to the mentoring of principals in particular.

The Principalship

Peter Senge (1990) says that an effective school leader needs the “Individual Disciplines” that constitute his systems theory of leadership. They are: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning. He says that it is not possible to boil down leadership into a simple list, but that, “Ultimately, people follow people who believe in something and have the abilities to achieve results in the service of those beliefs. Or, to put it another way, who are the natural leaders of learning organizations? They are the learners” (p. 360). Senge cites a speech by Corazon Aquino regarding the release of her husband, Benigno Aquino, from prison, in which she said in part, “We cannot of course, just place an order for such men and women to be or to lead the opposition. Such people are not made to order. They make themselves that way” (p.
359). For Senge the leaders of schools make themselves excellent by devoting their entire careers to developing the five disciplines of effective leadership.

Thomas Sergiovanni (1990, 1992, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1999, 2001) makes frequent criticisms of school leadership models that take a corporate approach such as the “pyramid” or “high performance” styles. Instead, he argues for a “transformative leadership model, where leaders and followers are united in pursuit of common goals” (1990, p. 23). He also argues for a re-imagining of schools as communities of learners, where the principal learns from teachers as well as other principals.

Robert Starratt (1995, 2003) believes that preparation programs for principals need to adapt themselves to the many changes occurring in the larger society. He follows the thinking of Sergiovanni in saying that principal formation should follow three main themes: cultivation of meaning, cultivation of community, and cultivation of moral responsibility. Starratt contrasts those three themes with three current trends in current educational administration: school improvement, democratic community, and social justice. In contrasting these three sets of themes he points out that nontraditional means of training, including mentoring, need to be considered if school leaders are to become truly prepared for the challenges they will face.

Stine (2001) evaluated nine instruments currently in use to evaluate the job performance of school principals. He also suggests a new model instrument that is based on Sergiovanni’s transformational leadership principals. One of the criteria included for an experienced administrator is whether they serve as a mentor to a beginning administrator.
Mentoring of Principals

LaPointe and Davis (2006) conducted a study of preparation programs for school leaders around the nation. They identified 8 that they considered to be superlative for various reasons. Those included: San Diego Unified School District, in partnership with the University of San Diego; Region I of the New York City Public Schools, in partnership with Bank Street College; The University of Connecticut; and Jefferson County, KY, Public Schools. The researchers concluded that these programs shared a number of characteristics, including high quality candidates, coherent curriculums along with modeling of program theory, and the close alignment of course content to intensive internship experiences, combined with “... guided reflection to help candidates process their experiences” (p. 15).

Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe and Meyerson (2005) conducted a review of literature on the development of school leaders throughout the United States. They identify several features that are shared in common by an increasing number of programs around the country. Those included: “Field-based internships, mentoring, cohort groups, tight collaboration between university programs and school districts, curricular coherence, problem-based instruction, and an emphasis on instructional leadership, change management, and organizational development” (p. 21).

Rothman (2008) discusses several different types of mentoring programs that have been adopted in various states. In Chicago there is a laboratory school where aspiring principals work at real-world tasks under the supervision of a mentor. A similar program called New Leaders for New Schools is a national program that recruits prospective principals for urban schools and assigns them for year-long residencies with
experienced administrators. The Center for Collaborative Education prepares principals in the Boston area through residency programs. One other program cited by Rothman is New York City’s Leadership Academy that provides some pre-service training, and also provides mentoring to all new principals during their first three years as administrators.

Gary Yukl (1994) believes that several types of managerial behaviors are needed in order to create and nurture strong relationships within an organization. Among these he includes “developing”. Developing as it is defined here includes “coaching, training, mentoring, and career counseling.” He continues by saying that, “. . . Developing involves special assignments designed to help the subordinate learn the new skills needed for a different job” (pp 124-125). In Yukl’s view an essential component of mentoring is “career counseling” which he believes will help an individual with various career difficulties. However, New Jersey’s mentoring program does not include any type of formalized counseling component.

Orr (2007) conducted a study that included 696 school principals. She compared a group who had attended one of five programs identified as innovative, and which included some form of mentoring component, to a control group of principals who had attended more traditional training programs, and who did not cite mentoring as an integral component of their preparation. She concluded that, “graduates of high quality leadership preparation programs are more likely to report more effective leadership practices than are graduates of conventional programs” (p. 11).

Orr (2006) when examining these same innovative programs, also concluded that,

These results suggest that the extent to which principals had exemplary leadership preparation content, instruction and experiences directly influences
what they learn, and that these in turn directly influence leadership practices (as well as preparation indirectly through leadership learning). (p. 30)

Spiro, Mattis, and Mitgang (2007) point out that mentoring of aspiring principals is a relatively new phenomenon, which has only begun to gain currency throughout approximately half of the states in the U.S. since 2000. They identified two mentoring programs for principals that had been rated highly by participants in one of their surveys. One was the New York City Leadership Academy, and the other was a program in Jefferson County, Kentucky. The authors point out that just because the protégés who completed the survey reported that they felt their mentoring experience was a positive one, that there is actually very little data available to measure the effectiveness of these programs. In order to establish a greater level of consistency between programs the authors suggest a number of “Quality Guidelines.” Some of those guidelines include:

1. High quality training for mentors should be a requirement and should be provided by any state with mentoring.

2. States or districts that require mentoring should gather meaningful information about its efficacy: especially how mentoring is or is not contributing to the development of leadership behaviors and dispositions that are needed to change the culture of schools towards improved teaching and learning.

3. To adequately support new principals as they develop from novices to self-assured leaders of change, mentoring should be provided for at least a year, and ideally two or more years. (p. 4)
Kathy Anthes (2002) wrote a policy brief for leaders of state departments of education, under the auspices of the Education Commission of the States and the United States Department of Education, regarding the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA 2001), also known as “No Child Left Behind,” in which she argues that, “mentors and counselors might be used to provide new principals with professional assistance and support” (p. 4). She also says that mentoring of beginning principals is a trend being adopted by many states as a means of increasing retention.

Richard Andrews and Margaret Grogan (2002), in a paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation, recommended that educational leadership programs should be revamped to include greater collaboration. They argue that such programs “…should be organized around problems of practice and delivered in collaboration with practitioners.” And that, “Programs must be organized in such a way that there are opportunities for novices and experts to reflect while-in-action and reflect about action” (p. 24).

Rice and Cohen (2006), in a paper presented to the American Education Finance Association, presented a formula for policy-makers who are interested in establishing the costs of programs for development of school leaders. They compared the costs of a number of programs for both teachers and principals. Mentoring is included as a key component of any such professional development program. In addition, they also factor in the costs for mentor training, which they consider to be highly important.

Mentoring Issues and Differing Types of Mentoring Relationships

Gagen and Bowie (2005) discuss the issue of proper training of educational mentors. Their primary concern is mentors of teachers. However, their model for training
of mentors incorporates aspects that are also applicable to mentors of principals, such as building a relationship of trust and open communication, modeling effective behavior, and recognition of a novice’s stages of development.

In her discussion of mentoring relationships for principals and other beginning managers, Pamela Matters (1994) says:

A successful mentoring partnership is defined as a close relationship between two people where the mentor guides and assists the mentee to a level of personal and professional excellence not attained previously. The tangible aspects are easily observable—new skills learned, ideas exchanged, enhancement of personal performance, and increased knowledge of a specific area of human endeavor. The intangible aspects are more difficult to perceive but they are noticeably felt because there is always a close emotional bonding between the participants which provides strength to the partnership structure in this essential relationship. (p. 4)

Turoczy (1996) compared two groups of teachers who aspired to become administrators. One group of aspirants had mentors who were current principals, while the other group did not have mentors. Her study concluded that a greater number of aspirants with mentors succeeded in attaining their first administrative position. She concludes that mentoring played an important role in this higher rate of success.

Hall (2008) describes a program established by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) called the Principals Advisory Leadership Services (PALS) Corps, which was designed to teach mentoring skills to principals who are at the mid-career stage. The program includes a 3-day institute and a 9-month
mentoring internship, which includes practice in actual mentoring, peer meetings, professional reading, and several self-reflection activities. The end result is that participants can earn the National Principals Mentoring Certificate.

Malone, Sharp and Thompson (2000) discuss perceptions of the principalship in Indiana. They are concerned about the logistical difficulties that mentors may face in working with their protégés off-site. But they acknowledge that, “Few individuals in the profession would deny the need for such critical mentoring, however” (p. 7).

Samier (2000) points out some practical concerns about formalized mentoring programs. She argues that a number of “contextual factors” need to be present in a mentoring relationship. Some of these include:

A. Opportunities for contact and individual choice in selection of each other, particularly across hierarchical and departmental boundaries.

B. Sufficient time to develop the relationship (two to five years).

C. Regulations and procedures allowing them to negotiate goals and activities.

D. Accommodation of the diversity and uniqueness of mentor and protégé in styles of thinking and working, in order that the mentor can create experiences tailored to the unique vision of professional practice, especially those facilitating collaboration and alliances.

E. Opportunities to engage in relationship-building activities, especially in developing dialogue.

F. Privacy and confidentiality in the relationship to address non-organizational issues in the protégé’s life, and disclose problems (pp. 93-94).
In examining the character of the relationship, Samier (2000) identifies the importance of trust and respect in a mentoring relationship. She cites Gehrke (1988) who characterizes the relationship as a form of love relationship, but distinct from other varieties such as “friendship, romantic, and familial—on the basis of biology, equity and passion, producing in its ideal form a platonic, formative relationship” (p. 90).

Continuing in this vein, Samier also says:

Drawing on Martin Buber’s existential phenomenology, Gehrke, 1988, (p. 44) argues that its defining characteristic is an I-Thou rather than I-It nature. The mentoring pair grow into an authentic relationship including a mutual confirmation of each other’s individual existence, worth and potential, rather than viewing each other as serving a utilitarian purpose, a form of relationship Buber saw as dominating most modern social relations. (p. 90)

Although some of these factors are mentioned in other research, no study has been found that directly addresses how the presence or the absence of these factors directly affects the participants. Later in her research Samier goes on to speak about possible defects inherent in a planned mentoring relationship that is formalized to make it adhere to a set of standardized outcomes. She says:

Programmed mentoring, on the other hand, as a rationalized activity and often of an understandably short term, inhibits both the full development of the necessary relational requirements, and by reinforcing conformity, inhibits leadership which has to transcend organizational realities to organizational possibilities. . . .
Clearly neither formal nor fully formalized mentoring adequately serves all those who could potentially benefit from the relationship. The essential question, though, is if a hybrid form cannot be adequately designed and adopted in an organization which meets the relational qualities of informal mentoring and the equity principles of a program, then which of the two approaches should be adopted in policy? (p. 99)

In discussing some of the problems associated with planned mentoring programs, Samier (2000) says:

On a more theoretical and philosophical level, formal programs are a technical rationalization of a value-laden, idiosyncratic, and irreducible form of developmental relationship. In order to harness mentoring to organizational purpose, it must be redefined to allow for the requirements of planning, made tractable by measurable traits, and deliverable in standardized, if not universally applicable form. Dimensions and practices in traditional mentoring are translated into tools, techniques and instruments in formalized programs. Formal mentoring, as Zey (1986, p. 154) notes, is a “new form of organizational development technology.” By this reduction, mentoring can be marketed as a magic bullet, a panacea, or a compensation for organizational dysfunctions: politics, discrimination, mediocrity, lack of orientation and training. Wunsch (1994, p. 27), notes that “The popularization of mentoring as a ‘quick fix’ for advancement in the workplace has blurred the definition, devalued the concept, and done little to advance the understanding of the process or the relationship.” Successes reported, are not distinguishable from the benefits of other supportive roles. . . . (p. 97)
Another highly important aspect of mentoring is whether it is part of a planned program, established as a requirement towards the completion of any form of certification or licensing. Zey (1984) examined mentoring programs established within public administration programs, as well as private sector mentoring programs, and found that a number of factors caused formalized mentoring programs to be unsuccessful. Sometimes the protégé had unrealistic expectations, or did not understand the expectations of the mentor. In other cases participation of protégés was not voluntary, the mentors were overburdened with other responsibilities, or co-workers of the protégé or of the mentor might become jealous or resentful of the relationship. The greatest problems cited were lack of time for contact between the mentor and the protégée, and the lack of choice that protégés had in selecting their mentor.

Daloz and Edelson (1992) compare internships and mentoring relationships, and argue that in either one the most important aspect is “reflective practice.” They argue that guiding that professional reflection on new roles and responsibilities is one of the most essential responsibilities of a mentor.

Gray, Fry, Bottoms, and O'Neill (2007) produced a report for the Southern Regional Education Board in which they evaluated a number of principal mentoring programs currently in place among their 16 member states. One of the items they discuss is whether the protégé should have the option of choosing his mentor. They argue against this option, claiming that the protégé lacks any useful criteria for making a valid selection. Over 60 percent of their survey respondents had chosen mentors with whom they were already familiar, or based on proximity, which subsequently limited the scope and variety of their learning experiences. The authors argue that choosing a well-trained
mentor, according to the needs of the protégé, should be the responsibility of the local university partner.

Another item in their report is a discussion of the need for well-defined roles and responsibilities for all of the constituents—mentor, protégé, school district and university. In addition, they also present an argument that the mentor is the one most able to accurately assess the protégé’s readiness to assume a leadership position.

Mentors are on the front line with aspiring principals and are in a good position to accurately assess their competencies and readiness for the principalship. Performance measures rather than time parameters, should determine the end of the internship and the intern’s readiness to begin the role of school leader. Such a system requires that mentors and interns—at the very outset of the internship—are clear about the expectations for satisfactory performance on each standard. (p. 26)

Hansford and Ehrich (2005) offer a comprehensive overview of a number of studies of mentoring programs for beginning school principals. They conclude with a list of what they consider to be the most important benefits of these programs. A partial listing of these benefits includes: support, empathy, counseling, sharing of ideas, problem solving, professional development, and improved confidence. They conclude by saying, “A program that offered participants support, trust and respect, mentors who listen, confidentiality, encouragement of reflection, networking and the sharing of ideas with a professional role model should be headed in the right direction” (p. 43).

Coleman, Low, Bush and Chew (1996) examined programs in Great Britain and Singapore. They noted some differences between the “Pre-Service Model” used in
Singapore and the "In-Service Model" used in Britain, but also that the newly formed relationships provided both groups with a valuable professional resource. The authors do discuss some of the perceptions of the participants; however, the study does not address whether standardization of the program outcomes had any bearing on the participants' perceptions of whether the mentoring component was satisfying or productive.

Kenneth Grover (1994) examined a pilot program in New York City that linked aspiring principals with mentors in their field. He noted that most of his study participants indicated that mentoring was a helpful experience. But he also writes that, "The effectiveness of the mentoring experience for a new principal appears to be directly related to the structure of the mentoring program and the capability of the mentor" (p. 22).

Ballet, Vandenberghhe, and Kelchtermans (2000) describe a program for aspiring principals instituted in Belgium, called Magistrum. This program includes a mentoring component, and the authors describe participation in the Magistrum as a "critical incident" in the professional development of most of the protégés. They also indicate that the program was less successful for some of the protégés, but there is not a discussion about whether a formalized mentoring component was a factor for the less satisfied participants.

Crow and Matthews (1998) argue that the mentoring of school leaders should be a career-long component of training. They discuss the characteristics of various forms of mentoring relationships and the stages that the protégé and the mentor pass through as the relationship develops, as well as how mentoring differs according to whether the protégé is at the beginning, middle or end-stage of his career. At the end of their book the authors
argue that the selection of the mentor should be done by the protégé, and that both the mentor and the protégé need some training in their respective positions. However, they are aware of the problems associated with an over-formalization of the relationship. They provide some examples of how to evaluate the relationship that allows both parties to determine the effectiveness of their respective contributions.

Alison Smith (2007) also makes an argument for the importance of continuing the mentoring experiences of more experienced principals who are at the mid-career stage. She cites a study conducted in New Zealand in which a number of experienced principals formed a peer group. She reports that the participants felt a heightened level of status through their participation in the program, that they enjoyed the opportunity for continuing professional development, and that they felt a strong appreciation for the fact that all the participants respected the confidential nature of the group discussions.

Jean and Evans (1995) conducted a study of a pilot program developed in Montana for the certification of principals in which the aspiring administrators were required to participate in a 1-year internship, which included working closely with an experienced mentor. The results of their survey indicated that a significant majority of the participating principals felt better prepared to assume their new roles. A majority of their supervising superintendents felt that the program was a benefit to the new principals, and that this experience should be a required component of graduate school training.

Daresh and Playko (1995) examine differing types of training required by new school administrators. They identify technical skills training ("What do I do now?") socialization skills ("What am I supposed to look like?") and self-awareness skills ("What do I look like?") as essential components of any established professional training
program. In assessing the relative importance of these different components they argue that the latter was particularly important, and they argue that training programs need to guide students to find ways to transform themselves into their new professional roles.

In a subsequent study Daresh and Playko (1996) conducted a comparative study of the components of career preparation in the fields of law, medicine, and the priesthood, and how those components might be applicable to the training of school administrators. They examine the same three essential types of training, as these were found in each profession's training of new practitioners. In medicine they found that clinical experiences, along with internships and residencies, were important to the attainment of technical and socialization skills, but that self-awareness skills were not addressed in a systematic manner. In the legal profession they found that technical skills and socialization skills were acquired both in university training, and in moot courts and clerkships. But, again, self-awareness skills were left to chance. The authors found that in the formation of priests all three components of professional training were addressed during the seminary experience. For aspiring priests self-awareness is attained during "formation" which includes the assignment of a spiritual advisor who acts as a mentor. This individual, "... is expected to assist the future priest engage in an ongoing and thoughtful review of personal values, ethical stances, moral frameworks, and ultimately personal commitment to religious and community life" (p.7). While the authors feel that there are valuable components in each of the different training models, they also argue that an implication of their research is that a mentoring component should be included in the training of aspiring school leaders in order to address what they feel is a critical, but often overlooked aspect of professional development.
Marsha Playko (1995) identifies four benefits to an aspiring school administrator that can be gained by participation in a mentoring program: Practical insights about the work of school administrators, increased self confidence in their own abilities, enhanced skills in a new professional role, and increased access to a wider network of other experienced school administrators.

Daresh and Playko (1995) also did research on the responsibilities of the protégé when engaged in a mentoring relationship. Based on a number of interviews with mentors and with protégés they concluded that the protégé needed to bring the following to the relationship: (a) a basic understanding of the teaching process, and the nature of leadership in general and in effective organizations, (b) good listening and communications skills, (c) openness and collegiality; and (d) a commitment to mentoring. They recommend that universities should provide training in these qualities to students before they enter into mentoring relationships. They also report that a mentoring relationship may not be an effective learning tool for all prospective school leaders.

In arguing for the importance of mentoring for beginning principals Daresh (1996) identifies four common problems faced by educators in every country around the world. These are: (a) meeting political demands for increased effectiveness and productivity; (b) providing education in ways that are consistent with the realities of diversity; (c) maintaining a focus on moral and ethical practice; and (d) determining the proper balance between individual rights and collective social order. He writes that the most effective school administrator must develop a mode of “spiritual leadership in which the administrator sees with the ‘two eyes’ of management and leadership” (p. 10).

Adapted from Sergiovanni’s (1992, 1990) “Moral Leadership” and “Value-added
Leadership” and Beck’s (1994) “Caring side of Leadership,” Daresh’s “Spiritual Leadership” is developed and flourishes through the practice of reflection on one’s practice, pursuit of academic learning and development of a personal belief platform. He concludes by asserting that mentoring relationships are the best means of facilitating all three of the essential elements of Spiritual Leadership.

Martha Bruckner (2001) examines the educational administration program at the University of Nebraska, at Omaha, and finds that the participants thought that the new mentoring component improved their overall preparation as school leaders. Students are required to select a mentor, who is a practicing administrator with whom they could maintain regular contact, and to work with that administrator throughout each semester, on real-life projects. Participants were required to sign a formal contract that detailed what each party agreed to contribute to their work together. The students were later asked to decide whether they wanted to continue with the same mentor in the second year, or to choose a new mentor. At the end of the first year all of the participants were asked to evaluate the usefulness of their collaborations. Surveys indicated general satisfaction with this program component, but also indicated a need to add the use of portfolios to aid in future assessments of progress.

Wilmore, McNeil, and Townzen (1999) conducted a survey to evaluate the success of a new program at the University of Texas at Arlington, after its first year. The program includes an internship component for school leaders. They concluded that 93% of the participants found the program to be professionally beneficial, that all of the students in the program had completed their degree programs, had met their certification
requirements, and that all of them had been hired in leadership positions of their choosing.

When designing a successful mentoring program Muse, Thomas, and Wasden (1992) identify several issues that must be addressed which include: (a) Some school administrators may not make good mentors; (b) Some mentors may misuse their interns to fill personal agendas; (c) Some mentors may be too controlling and protective; (d) Some mentors may not acknowledge an intern's limitations; (e) Single mentors may project a limited perspective; (f) Dependence on mentors is a possibility; (g) Stereotypical gender attitudes may influence the mentoring process.

Walker and Stott (1994) have found several of these issues to be important factors in mentoring relationship. In addition, they emphasize that the correct matching of intern to mentor is essential, and the importance of selecting well qualified mentors.

Milstein and Krueger (1997) have also examined mentoring relationships for school administrators. They found that, “Mentors gain because of the satisfaction experienced by having the opportunity to serve and give back to the field through their efforts . . . and to have someone actively reflect with them about their own leadership experiences and problems” (p. 109).

Milstein (1996) and Milstein et al. (1993) also argue that regular training is essential for mentors, and that it should include the establishment of clear expectations, effective activities and experiences, with practical examples, along with regular discussions of why mentoring relationships are beneficial to both participants.

Milstein et al. (1993) also say that when universities and school districts become partners in the mentoring of new principals that there should be a team of decision-
makers, all working together, that includes university deans, department chairs, faculty members and central office and site-based administrators, in order to consider all the varying needs of the protégés, mentors, university and school district.

Carol Hopson (1995) examines the role of gender in mentoring relationships. She based her approach on Norma Carr-Fuffino’s *The Promotable Woman* (1994), which offers information about mentoring. She mentored several younger women who would become the superiors of older men who were uncomfortable with the idea of women in positions of leadership. She found that acting as a role model to her protégés was an effective means of helping to bridge this difficulty.

Blackman and Fenwick (2000) also examined gender and race issues as they relate to mentoring relationships. At the time they conducted their research they found that 96 percent of the nation’s superintendents, over 80 percent of school board presidents, and 60 percent of all principals were all white males, while over 73 percent of all teachers—and, therefore, future school leaders—were women, and 13 percent of principals belonged to minority groups. Their argument is that informal mentoring relationships are less likely to occur between principals of different races and genders, and that more formalized pairings of protégés and mentors are needed to overcome this obstacle.

Geismar, Morris and Lieberman (2000) have developed the Mentor Identification Instrument that they believe will assist in identifying individuals who possess the skills and talents needed to mentor a protégé.

Haberman and Dill (1999) have developed the Haberman Urban Principal Selection Interview that is intended to identify the aspiring administrators, “who bring a
combination of ideology and action to the principalship. These individuals can then be paired with ‘Star Principals,’ those that have demonstrated success in their schools and who exhibit similar characteristics, so that the interns can observe these belief systems in operation” (p. 4).

Marsha Mann (1998) discusses a newly revised training program for school administrators developed by the Hawaii School Leadership Academy and the Pacific Region Educational laboratory that allows new school administrators to spend from three weeks to three months “shadowing” more experienced administrators. A series of debriefing sessions are then held between the protégé, the mentor, and one of a number of retired superintendents who act as facilitators. While her survey concluded that most participants considered the initial mentoring experience to be very beneficial, she also found that the beginning administrators desired more follow-up opportunities to meet with their mentors later on when greater experience led to new problems.

Kram (1985) discusses various types of mentoring relationships. Her study identified four phases through which a mentoring relationship passes from beginning to end. There is an initiation phase when the relationship is first established. Next is a cultivation phase when the mentor gradually expands their level of support, and also gradually increases the level of their expectations for the protégé’s performance. Next is a separation phase as one or both parties realize that the mentoring relationship is reaching the end of its usefulness. Finally, there is a redefinition phase as the relationship either comes to a complete end, or else it is transformed into a different type of relationship. She cites Deal and Kennedy (1982), Tichey (1983), and Peters and Waterman (1982) in
arguing that certain conditions must exist within an organization if the benefits of mentoring relationships will be achieved.

First organizations need opportunities for frequent and open interaction between managers at different career stages and hierarchical levels. Individuals can then initiate and cultivate the kinds of relationships that respond to current developmental needs. Second, organizational members must have the interpersonal skills to build supportive relationships, as well as the willingness and interest in doing so. Third, the organization’s reward system, culture, and norms must value and encourage relationship-building activities. (p. 160)

John Peper (1994) makes an argument that the mentoring of school leaders has been shown to be effective in the research done by Daresh and Playko (1994) and Donaldson (1994). However, he is concerned that there is a limit to how much new information can be gleaned from further normative studies of mentoring. He argues that future studies should be based on case studies, biographies, and narrative reflections on mentoring, as well as classic literature that contains references to mentoring.

Cohen and Fickel (2005) discuss financial considerations for policy makers who are considering the creation of a mentoring program. They argue that stipends for mentors are essential to offset costs incurred in the support of novice principals. They also suggest that the costs for administrative training programs should be divided between the novice principal, the state and the supporting university.

Summary

The research presented here indicates that mentoring of beginning school principals is an indispensible part of their professional training. But, at the same time, it
also shows that there is a wide range of viewpoints as to how that mentoring should be accomplished. There are also many different views as to how that mentoring should be structured. It is also apparent that a number of researchers have serious concerns about some of the pitfalls of a mentoring program that is not well structured.

This study utilized the research of Eugenie Samier (2000) as the vehicle for an examination of the structure of the mentoring program that is currently in place in New Jersey. Chapter III provides the methodology and design of the study.
Chapter III

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to document the reported experiences of 9 beginning principals who participated in New Jersey's revised mentoring program, in order to gain a better understanding of this aspect of the professional education of school leaders. The purpose of this chapter is to present the design and methods for this study of the reported experiences of beginning principals in New Jersey's mentoring program. Since the State changed the requirements for licensing in 2005, and now requires that the beginning principal complete a 2-year program with a state-selected mentor, and engage in a series of eight explorations, followed by a Job-embedded Action Research Report based on the ISLLC standards for school administrators, this researcher was interested in determining in what ways the participants reported that the new program did or did not meet their professional needs. This research is important because mentoring relationships may be powerfully affected by whether they are standardized, and by whether other “contextual factors” (Samier, 2000) are present. The overall question for the proposed study was: What were the reported experiences of nine beginning principals in mentoring relationships in a New Jersey program that has recently changed certain of its key elements?

This chapter identifies the interview participants, and their selection, the data collection process, maintenance of the research, and analysis of the data.
Method

This researcher was interested in learning about the experiences of 9 beginning principals who have participated in New Jersey’s revised mentoring program, as part of their professional training as school leaders, in order to weigh these against Samier’s contextual factors for mentoring programs. The study was designed within the qualitative paradigm as an open ended, in-depth interview study. As stated by Fullan (2001b): “An understanding of what reality is from the point of view of people within the role [author’s italics] is an essential starting point for constructing practical theory of the meaning and results of change attempts” (p. 137). A qualitative interview study was a method of choice for exploring experiences from the perspectives of participants (Kvale, 1996; Mishler, 1986; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Seidman, 1998). This study investigated the topic from a qualitative-naturalistic-formative approach. According to Michael Patton (2001) the choice of a qualitative design is appropriate to a developmental or changing program. “The qualitative-naturalistic-formative approach is especially appropriate for developing, innovative or changing programs where the focus is on program improvement, facilitating more effective implementation, and exploring a variety of effects on participants” (p. 53).

This research consisted of personal in-depth interviews from a diverse group of participating principals whereby a descriptive qualitative design was the most appropriate means to gather and interpret data in order to formulate conclusions that may help to better understand the nature of mentoring relationships.
Design

The 9 beginning principals had all completed at least 1 year or more of the mentoring program for administrative licensing. The information gained from these interviews is discussed in conjunction with the findings from prior research in order to reach an understanding of how these interview participants perceive the relationship in which they were involved.

Population and Sample

Because the purpose of this research was to examine the perceptions of beginning principals who are participating in the state's new 2-year mentoring program, which is required for licensing, the starting population was comprised of any beginning school administrator in New Jersey. Initially the researcher sought access to all of the current protégés in New Jersey. After two attempts the State Department of Education responded that such access was being denied because they had not yet conducted their own internal study of the program. In order to narrow the sample to between 7 and 10 administrators it was then necessary to use a variety of personal contacts. Acquaintances in various districts pointed the researcher towards possible interviewees. These individuals in turn identified fellow administrators in their cohort groups whom they thought might be interested in participating in this study. The "snowballing" of contacts took approximately 2 to 3 months, until the target number was achieved. The 9 beginning principals worked in 6 different school districts located in Morris County, Middlesex County, and Warren County. Although the size of the district and the diversity reflected in their District Factor Groupings was not considered at the time the participants were
selected, these factors will be analyzed when the participants are profiled in order to
determine whether any meta-themes have any correlation to these factors.

Protection of Confidentiality

All of the interviewees were volunteers who were initially contacted because they
were known to be beginning principals in various school districts in New Jersey. All
participants were asked to sign an Informed Consent Form prior to the interview. Before
the beginning of each interview session the participants were shown the Informed
Consent Form, and were asked to acknowledge and identify the document on record. The
researcher identified the participants by a code letter from A to I. Each tape was labeled
according to the individual code letters, and the date of the interview session. All of the
interview tapes, Informed Consent Forms, and any other relevant data, was stored in the
researcher’s home office in a locked file cabinet.

Data Collection

The interviews were conducted at locations that were determined based on mutual
convenience, and on the availability of suitable privacy. The researcher interviewed each
of the beginning principals at separate times. Each interview was tape recorded for
purposes of both accuracy and spontaneity. At the start of each recording the researcher
identified himself and the interview participant’s code letter, and stated the purpose of the
interview. Each participant was then asked the series of 23 questions, including any
follow-up questions that may have been needed for clarification. At the end of each
interview the participants were asked if they had any further comments before the
sessions were concluded. Each participant was given the opportunity to receive a copy of
his or her own recorded interviews upon completion of the research.


**Instrument**

The instrument, which is the set of open-ended interview questions, addresses aspects of the mentoring relationship, from the point of view of the protégé. These are directly related to the primary research question. It was anticipated that the interviews would be done in two sessions. The first round of interview sessions allowed the researcher to assimilate and begin to analyze responses, in order to identify any meta-themes that arose. If needed, a follow-up interview was then conducted to clarify any questions and to focus on any identified meta-themes.

The set of interview questions was the instrument used to gather qualitative research from the participants in the research study. The instrument consists of a set of twenty-three questions that have been geared to a beginning principal. Related follow-up questions were used in order to encourage participants to give the fullest possible responses.

*Interview Questions for Protégés*

1. What do you recall of your expectations for working with a mentor, before you started the program?

2. Did your experience with your mentor meet your expectations? Why or why not?

3. If you ever decide to become a mentor yourself, would you do more than your mentor, less than your mentor, or the same as your mentor?

4. Would you have preferred that your work with your mentor encompassed more or less than the eight explorations and the research project? Explain.

5. How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?
(6) What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for you professionally?

(7) What aspect of your work with your mentor did you find to be least useful to you professionally?

(8) What was the most helpful factor in establishing a working relationship with your mentor?

(9) What was the greatest hindrance to forming a productive relationship with your mentor?

(10) In what ways do you think that the change from a 1-year program to a 2-year program may have helped or hindered your professional development?

(11) Would any type of relationship-building activity have helped you and your mentor to establish a more productive relationship? Specify.

(12) If your mentor was of the opposite gender, how did this factor affect your relationship?

(13) If given the option, would you have preferred to select your own mentor?

(14) Did the fact that you did not get any choice in the selection of your mentor affect your subsequent relationship with that mentor in any way? Specify.

(15) If given the option of selecting your own mentor, would you have chosen a person with whom you had a prior professional relationship, or would you have chosen someone with whom you had no prior professional relationship? Explain why.

(16) In what ways did the fact that your mentor came from outside of your district make a difference in your relationship with your mentor?
(17) In what ways did it help you professionally to have a mentor's input on each of the State's required activities?

(18) How frequently do you expect to maintain contact with your mentor after the 2-year program is officially ended?

(19) Do you think that your mentor derived any professional benefit through his or her participation in this program? Explain

(20) Do you feel that you personally did anything to assist your mentor in his or her professional development?

(21) Describe how your mentor did or did not respect your privacy and need for confidentiality.

(22) In what ways was your mentor able to assist you with any non-school related issues?

(23) What recommendations, if any, do you have for improving the mentoring component of the State's licensure process?

In order to show a clear link between the interview instrument and the study sub-questions, a table of comparisons, showing the relationship of contextual factors to interview questions has been included in Chapter IV. In addition, a frequency table showing the number of interview questions related to each contextual factor has also been included in Chapter IV.

_Jury of Experts_

A Jury of Experts was assembled to review the interview questions, in order to ensure that they are suitable for fully and completely eliciting the perceptions of the interview participants. The Jury of Experts was composed of 3 individuals who have
extensive knowledge of the topic. Each of the experts was given a copy of the research instrument, which originally had 19 questions, along with a statement at the top that summarized the purpose of the study. They were also given a form to complete that asked them to provide their name and professional title. The form also gave the experts a choice of accepting the instrument as written, or of making suggestions for changes. Space was provided for the experts to write any comments about the instrument that they wished to include. Each expert was also asked to sign and date the form.

Expert 1 is currently a school administrator, in Morris County’s Denville school district, who recently completed the state’s mentoring requirement just before it was changed from a 1-year program to a 2-year program. Although this made him ineligible to serve as an interviewee, it was felt that his knowledge of the program would give him valuable insight as to the effectiveness of the research instrument. His returned form indicated one suggestion, which was to include a question regarding the Explorations that the protégés work on with their mentors. Question 4 was added as a result of this suggestion.

Expert 2 is a retired superintendent of the Cedar Grove School District, in Essex County. She is also an NSU Field Associate and Dissertation Chair, with extensive experience in the supervision of numerous beginning school administrators. She has also acted as both an informal and formal mentor to several beginning school administrators, although not as part of the State’s current mentoring program for licensing. She made 5 suggestions for changes. The first was that what are now questions 19 and 20 should be placed together, and that they should be slightly re-worded so as not to be redundant. This was done, as per the suggestion. Second, she suggested that what is now question 10
should be re-worded because it previously assumed that the interviewee would have some knowledge of the mentoring program when it was 1 year in length. This question has now been re-worded. Her third and fifth suggestions referred to specific words in two questions. The word “choice” has now been changed to “option” in what are now questions 13 and 15. Her final suggestion was that the previous wording of what is now question 14 should be changed because it might have conveyed a bias. This question has now been re-worded.

Expert 3 was Professor Eugenie Samier of Simon Fraser University, who is the author of the lead article that forms the basis of much of this research project. The researcher also had a follow-up phone conversation of approximately 30 minutes with Dr. Samier regarding the research instrument. She was informed of the suggestions made by the other experts, and felt that the questions as revised were appropriate to accomplish the goal of the research. However, she also suggested the addition of 3 other questions. Her concern was that most people have different conceptions of what actually constitutes mentoring. Some may see it as a supporting role, while others expect their mentors to take on a more active teaching role. Dr. Samier suggested that questions should be included that would help elucidate what the interviewees had initially expected of their mentors, in order to improve the comparison of their responses to questions about their perceptions of their experiences in the program. Questions 1, 2 and 3 have been added in response to this suggestion.

Data Analysis

While the data for this research was being collected, through the voluntary taped interview sessions with 9 beginning principals who were participating in New Jersey’s
mentoring program, a Researcher’s Log was used for organizational purposes, and as a means of recording interview data. It was also used as a vehicle for recording of the researcher’s thoughts and impressions during the interview phase. The log was then employed during the analysis phase in order to add important data that could assist in a better and more accurate interpretation.

The data for this study was analyzed using more than 1 model. To start with, the responses to the interview questions will be examined for similarities and differences between the various participants. Patton (2001) says,

If a standard open-ended interview is used, it is fairly easy to do cross-case or cross-interview analysis for each question in the interview. With the interview guide approach, answers from different people can be grouped by topics from the guide, but the relevant data won’t be found in the same place in each interview. The interview guide actually constitutes a descriptive, analytical framework for analysis. (p. 376).

Kvale (1996) divides the analysis of interviews into six steps (all italics are the author’s):

A first step is when subjects describe their lived world during the interview. . .

A second step would be that the subjects themselves discover new relationships during the interview, see new meanings in what they experience and do. . .
In a third step, the interviewer, during the interview, condenses and interprets the meaning of what the interviewee describes, and “sends” the meaning back.

In a fourth step, the transcribed interview is interpreted by the interviewer, either alone or with other researchers. Three parts of this analysis may be discerned; first, structuring the often large and complex interview for analysis. This is usually done today by transcription and by programs for computer analysis of qualitative material. The next part consists of a clarification of the material, making it amenable to analysis. The analysis proper involves developing the meanings of the interviews, bringing the subjects’ own understanding into the light as well as providing new perspectives from the researcher on the phenomena. Five main approaches to the analysis of meaning are condensation, categorization, narrative structuring, interpretation, and ad hoc methods.

A fifth step would be a re-interview.

A possible sixth step would be to extend the continuum of description and interpretation to include action, in that subjects begin to act from new insights they have gained during their interview. (pp. 189-190)

After looking for similarities and differences, the analysis in this research took a two-pronged approach, starting first with “meaning categorization,” which means that categories were created according to major themes, which were Samier’s contextual factors. Interview statements were then numerically coded to indicate the category into which they fell. After categorization the researcher then applied “meaning interpretation.”
Kvale (1996) says, “In contrast to the decontextualization of statements by categorization, interpretation recontextualizes the statements within broader frames of reference” (p. 193). In this way the data was then applied to Samier’s contextual factors in order to determine how these matched up with the actual experiences of the interviewees. In most cases the data could be organized according to whether particular factors were present or absent within each relationship. If a factor was present, then follow-up questions could be organized accordingly, using a table format. If a factor was absent then it was also possible to group other related responses together as well. The tables of data that resulted clearly indicated how the presence or absence of a given factor had influenced the overall relationship. By comparing all 6 tables, and looking for commonalities or discrepancies the researcher was able to identify relationships between the factors, and also to identify any outliers.

There was no comparison between administrators based upon the grade level of their schools, the District Factor Grouping of their school districts, or on whether their schools are public or private, except as a reference point for exploring any potential influences that might be related to these ancillary factors. Participating school administrators were profiled, in order to identify any common patterns. Any commonality in pattern was categorized, analyzed and discussed as applicable.

The findings from this study are discussed in conjunction with the literature discussed in Chapter II. A synthesis of the findings of this study, as well as a discussion of relevant prior research, is presented in the conclusions and recommendations section of Chapter V.
Chapter IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The primary research question for the proposed study was: What are the reported experiences of 9 principals who are involved in mentoring relationships as part of their professional education as school leaders?

Sub-questions included the following: (a) How have Samier's contextual factors affected these mentoring relationships? (b) What changes to the current program, if any, would the protégés suggest?

In order to better understand the experiences of the 9 school administrators, and whether in their experiences the contextual factors outlined by Samier (2000) had a bearing on their relationships with their mentors, the researcher conducted a series of interviews using the research instrument. The presentation of findings includes the following: a brief description of the interview participants; a table showing the correlation of the interview questions; a discussion of specific responses to the questions related to each contextual factor, in order from 1 – 6, including specific summary comments; and general summary comments related to all of the contextual factors.

The Participants

The 9 interview participants were initially identified by letter, from A – I, throughout all of the initial stages of the study. For the discussions that follow, each participant was assigned a pseudonym whose first letter corresponded to the letter coding
in order to make it easier for readers to keep track of the individuals. The assignment of pseudonyms also maintains the gender of the subjects. The pseudonyms are listed in the table below.

Table 1

*Table of Pseudonyms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>Corresponding Pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Andrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Bernadette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Catherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Deborah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Francis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Gregory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Helen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Ingrid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Andrew, Bernadette, Deborah, Francis, and Gregory listed their ages as “below fifty years of age.” The other participants did not provide their ages. It was, therefore, not possible to compare their ages or level of maturity.

Each one of the participants had at least 5 or more years as a teacher before entering into an administrative program. All 9 of the participants completed their administrative programs at accredited colleges or universities in New Jersey. After having been hired as an administrator, under a provisional Certificate of Eligibility, each
of the participants was then required to ask the NJ Department of Education to be assigned a mentor, with whom they would be working for a period of 2 years. During that time period the participants would be required to complete a series of 8 explorations and a job-embedded action research report. In addition, each participant was expected to attend meetings of their peer support group, as scheduled by their mentors. All of the participants, except for Helen, were interviewed when they were in the final 6 months of their 2-year mentoring program. Helen had just completed her first year, and was about to begin the second year.

The 9 beginning principals work in 6 different school districts located in Morris County, Middlesex County and Warren County.

Table 2 shows the District Factor Grouping (DFG) indicator of each interview participants' school district.

Table 2

*Table Showing the DFG of the Interview Participants' School Districts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Participants</th>
<th>District Factor Grouping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>D/E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>G/H</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The District Factor Grouping did not appear to have any significant impact on the study. However, this may have been due to the fact that the participants all came from very similar districts, usually with above average socio-economic levels. The only significant issue that the researcher could identify was that most of the participants did reflect upon the substance of their discussions during the peer group meetings. The participants' perceptions of the usefulness of these discussions were directly related to whether their peers or the mentors that were present had had experience with parents, students or issues that were similar to their own. Elizabeth and Helen were the only ones who reported a concern that their mentors' work experiences were different from their own. However, they reported that this was due to differences in experience in specific professional job functions, rather than to any difference in experiences between any particular District Factor Groupings. For example, Elizabeth was initially hired as a principal. After 1 year she changed jobs and became a supervisor of personnel in her district. She felt that her mentor was no longer able to assist her, and they mutually agreed to terminate their relationship. Elizabeth then asked the Department of Education for a new mentor who had experience in personnel issues. After she was assigned a new mentor who had this type of experience she finished her second year with that other individual.

Helen expressed concerns about the fact that her mentor had never worked as a principal, but only had experience as a superintendent. She planned to continue this relationship, but she felt that it would have been a more productive experience if her mentor had had similar job related experiences.
Correlation of Interview Questions to the Contextual Factors

Six of the contextual factors identified by Samier (2000) as necessary for a successful mentoring relationship, and which are most relevant to the field of educational administration, are as follows:

A. Opportunities for contact and individual choice in selection of each other, particularly across hierarchical and departmental boundaries.

B. Sufficient time to develop the relationship (two to five years).

C. Regulations and procedures allowing them to negotiate goals and activities.

D. Accommodation of the diversity and uniqueness of mentor and protégé in styles of thinking and working, in order that the mentor can create experiences tailored to the unique vision of professional practice, especially those facilitating collaboration and alliances.

E. Opportunities to engage in relationship-building activities, especially in developing dialogue.

F. Privacy and confidentiality in the relationship to address non-organizational issues in the protégé’s life, and disclose problems (pp. 93-94).

Each of the interview questions is directly connected to one or more of the contextual factors. Table 3 indicates the factors and which questions are related to each one. Several questions apply to more than one factor due to the overlapping and interconnected nature of the contextual factors.
Table 3

Table of Comparisons Between Samier's Contextual Factors and the Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contextual Factors</th>
<th>Related Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>13, 14, 15, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5, 10, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 19, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>16, 21, 22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 also shows the interview questions and a comparison to their related contextual factors.

Table 4

Comparisons Between Interview Questions and Samier's Contextual Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Contextual Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>C, D, E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>D, E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>C, D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>B, C, D, E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>C, D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>C, D</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>A, F</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>C, D</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>B, E</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Sub Question #2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion of Responses to Questions

Discussion of Contextual Factor A: Opportunity for Individual Selection of Mentor

There should be opportunities for contact and individual choice in selection of each other, particularly across hierarchical and departmental boundaries.

The four questions related to this factor were as follows:

(13) If given the option, would you have preferred to select your own mentor?

(14) Did the fact that you did not get any choice in the selection of your mentor affect your subsequent relationship with that mentor in any way? Specify.

(15) If given the option of selecting your own mentor, would you have chosen a person with whom you had a prior professional relationship, or would you have chosen someone with whom you had no prior professional relationship? Explain why.

(16) In what ways did the fact that your mentor came from outside of your district make a difference in your relationship with your mentor?

Summary of Issues Related to Contextual Factor A

In regard to whether they would have preferred some choice in the selection of their mentor the majority of respondents said yes. Bernadette and Catherine were somewhat ambivalent because they were both very satisfied with the mentors they were assigned. But both Bernadette and Catherine recognized that others might be less fortunate in their assignments. Only Gregory felt no need to be involved in the selection process, because he was confident he could form a strong relationship with anyone.

In probing to further to determine whether the lack of choice had actually made a significant difference in the relationship, Andrew, Catherine, and Gregory said that it had
no real effect. They had established a strong bond despite having no input. But Catherine also was assigned the mentor she would have chosen for herself. In addition, Andrew and Gregory both responded this way because they were confident of their ability to form a positive relationship with anyone. Bernadette was somewhat ambivalent because she felt that she had formed a strong relationship. But she acknowledged that other members of her peer group had not enjoyed such positive relationships with their mentors. All of the other participants felt that lack of choice did affect their relationships. The most common thread between them was that it was harder to build a sense of confidence and trust.

Question 15, whether the participants would have preferred a mentor with whom they had some prior professional relationship, was intended to elicit how having some input into the selection process might have effected their choice of a mentor. Deborah and Gregory said that they did not need to have any prior relationship. However, Deborah felt that it was important for the mentor to have some knowledge of the issues in her district. Gregory, again, felt quite confident that he could build a strong professional relationship very quickly. Ingrid said that this issue was not relevant to her because she had very few professional relationships from which to choose. However, if she were choosing a mentor from within her district, it would have been a colleague with whom she felt comfortable working, which implies that there would have been some form of prior relationship. All of the other participants felt very strongly that having a prior relationship would improve their mentoring experience, and that this factor would be a consideration if they were selecting their own mentor.

Question 16 asked whether having a mentor come from outside of the protégé’s district made a difference in their relationship. This question was intended to elicit some
idea of how this change in the Department of Education’s policy affected these relationships. Andrew, Bernadette, Elizabeth, Francis, and Ingrid felt that this was generally a positive factor. A greater sense of confidentiality was the most common reason. Gregory and Helen both said this was not an issue in their relationships, but both thought that increased confidentiality would be important for others who were involved in the mentoring process. Deborah was the most enthusiastic about having an outside mentor, saying that this introduced greater richness and diversity of ideas into the relationship. However, Catherine felt that she had received less guidance from her outside mentor than she would have gained from someone who had greater familiarity with her district.

The researcher’s overall conclusions regarding this contextual factor are that those participants for whom a strong relationship was important either wanted or needed some input into the selection process. Samier (2000) feels that reaching across hierarchical and departmental boundaries is important, and the State may be in a better position to facilitate that aspect of the selection process. If protégés were only permitted to select from the small pool of State-trained mentors in their general vicinity, they might have considerable difficulty in finding an individual with whom they had a prior professional relationship. Ingrid’s suggestion that the protégé might be asked to submit some form of survey about what they were looking for in a mentor could be a very good way to provide some form of input into the selection process. But this would only be viable if the pool of available mentors was much larger.

The peer groups seemed to be a valuable relationship-building tool for all of the protégés. Since some mentors will inevitably be better than others, the small group
meetings provide an opportunity for interactions with a wider circle of experienced administrators. In most cases the majority of participants agreed that these meetings were one of the most valuable components of the mentoring program, probably because they inherently provide an opportunity for more choice and selection of the individuals with whom one interacts, and from whom they would accept ideas and advice.

*Discussions With the Participants Related to Contextual Factor A*

*Andrew.*

Andrew said he would have liked to have some input into the selection process. He said in part, “Yes, definitely. Yes, I would have chosen someone who was, you know, doing what I’m doing, you know, building-level principal or building-level vice principal, rather than a superintendent, or a retired superintendent.” As to whether the lack of choice affected their subsequent relationship, Andrew said that he did not. He felt that their relationship had turned into a positive and productive one. However, Andrew did indicate that his preference would have been to select a mentor who was known to him either by working together, by reputation or through a recommendation. He felt comfortable with not knowing his mentor previously, as long as the individual proved to be highly competent. “In my case, there were people that I knew that I would have liked . . . to have that relationship with. But I don’t think in every case you would have to know—you know, it’s not a black and white decision. I don’t think in every case you’d have to know that person. It’s not a black and white.” Having his mentor come from outside of his district was a very positive aspect of the relationship for this participant. “The very positive side is that I felt very free to ask any kind of question what-so-ever,
because my tenure wasn’t at stake, and I knew that nothing would get back to my superintendent or my colleagues. So it made it very safe.”

_Bernadette._

Bernadette responded that she might have initially preferred some voice in the selection, but that after completing the program she felt very satisfied with the mentor that was chosen for her. She said, “So in the long run I’m glad I didn’t select my own mentor. But that’s because I have a good relationship with him.” If she had not had a positive relationship with her mentor Bernadette indicated she might have felt differently about the selection process. Bernadette was somewhat ambivalent as to whether she would have chosen a mentor that she knew. She felt that having a prior bond might cause a mentor to not require as much work from their protégé; that somehow they might be held to a lower standard. On the other hand she also acknowledged that other people she knew in her peer group were not so fortunate in the mentors to whom they were assigned, and that they expressed unhappiness with the relationships they had with those individuals. She said:

_I think if you pick somebody you know, you’re comfortable with that person, but you may have a tendency of being a little lazy as far as the requirements in a sense. But I think if you picked . . . I feel very fortunate that I didn’t have a choice, and it worked out well. I felt that my mentor was there for me, and did everything that I felt he could have done to help me; and has always assisted me. But, I don’t feel everybody else was that fortunate. So, with that being said, I could say I probably would have picked somebody I knew just because I would have been able to pick someone that I felt I could truly go to. Where, right now it’s a lottery. Some people got lucky, and some people didn’t._

When discussing the advantages of having a mentor from outside of her district

Bernadette recognized the advantages of a certain degree of anonymity. She expressed a
sense of freedom to talk about people and situations without worrying about guarding her words.

I think what it did for me was it allowed me to be extremely honest in my thinking, because I knew that it would in no way impact me as far as in-house. If I had any questions about something or someone I was able to speak freely—I didn’t have to give any names. He really had no idea of who I was talking about.

*Catherine.*

Catherine said that when she was informed of her mentor’s name it turned out that she knew and liked this individual, and that they had previously worked together in the same district. She indicated that if given a choice, she would have selected the same person. When asked if she would have chosen someone with whom she was familiar, Catherine felt that it would be important to know something of the person’s background in order to ensure a level of compatibility. She said:

Well, I think a prior professional relationship, assuming it was a good one, you know, I think that helps. I mean to have a stranger come in, and not know what type of administrator they were. There are so many different leadership styles, and how they interact with the staff. . . . I would think it’s important to have a prior relationship.

Catherine went on to add that no one in her peer group had expressed any problems with their mentors. She thought that they probably had a slower start in establishing a working relationship. Catherine felt very differently from Bernadette regarding having a mentor from outside of her district. She felt that having some insider knowledge of the people and the politics was essential. She related a story about having to deal with a difficult parent, who also happened to be married to a Board of Education member, who was well known to her mentor. She felt that she might not have received useful advice or guidance from a mentor who was unaware of the nuances of that situation. “So I think the mentor, if they are not from the district, needs to really become
familiar with how this district works a little bit, before they get started with their mentee. I think that there’s a lot to be said . . . the politics are very important.”

In addition, she also related another anecdote about listening to a colleague in her peer group, who was employed in a district that was far less affluent than her own, and who was working on a technology plan that was several years behind the level of her own district. The subject felt that a mentor from a district that was less technologically advanced than her own would be unable to provide her with useful advice or guidance.

So somebody coming in from the outside . . . technology especially. Someone did an action plan on implementing new technology, it was a technology action plan. And I was sitting there thinking, oh, my gosh, they’re just doing this? I mean we’ve been doing this for years. So, an administrator coming in from that district wouldn’t have that kind of knowledge base, that this is what we do in my district with technology, and this is how we work.

Deborah.

Deborah initially said that she might have liked to choose a mentor that she already knew because “that might have made some parts of it easier.” But when asked to clarify this point she said she preferred someone from outside of her district, but that it should be a person who had some knowledge of the district where she worked. She also said that having a prior professional relationship was not very important to her, but that she felt she needed a person who understood the organizational make-up of her district, and its work requirements.

I guess I would have gone with somebody with whom I had no prior professional relationship. But somebody who knew of the district and knew of the demands within the district. Having somebody who knew enough about the district deadlines, the demands—who didn’t need to be taught about the organizational flow. Right now I have no one to help me out with some of the day-to-day stuff. I could use somebody to go to and say, “How do I do this?”
In addition, she also said that the reason why she did not feel the need to have more input into the choice of a mentor was that she felt fortunate about being paired with someone who had a personality that was very similar to her own. She indicated that this made her feel more comfortable in discussing questions and concerns. Deborah said that while she did not need a mentor to walk her through each detail she liked having a person who would share ideas with her, and point her in the right direction. She seemed to feel that someone who knew her professionally might also try to take a more active role than she wanted from her mentor. “I liked having somebody who gave me input on what I was doing without trying to tell me how to do every single step, but who just gave me a little guidance in the right direction.”

Elizabeth.

Elizabeth made a very strong case for the importance of having some choice in the selection of one’s mentor. She related her experience of having to switch mentors when she changed jobs, and she indicated her feeling that if she had not had a choice, then her previous mentor would have been unable to advise her adequately. “I just felt that if they were making this as serious as it sounded, and the fact that I didn’t know all the ins and outs of all the requirements, I wanted to make sure it was someone who would really help me.”

In regard to choosing a mentor Elizabeth said that she felt that job experience, as well as proximity, were the two major factors to consider. She also thought that having a say in the selection of a mentor would eliminate any concerns of possible gender issues.

. . . I think choice is important. I think that would take care of the gender issue. If they are more comfortable with the same sex mentor, and also that they take a look at the person’s background, and take a look logistically at where does this person live. Where does this person work? I think that’s important.
Elizabeth also discussed what she might consider if she had the option of choosing her own mentor. She felt that choosing a mentor from outside of her district would provide her with greater variety and a richer level of professional conversation. She also felt that it would provide her with a greater level of confidentiality.

I think that, even though it's convenient to have someone in your district, I'd prefer not to because they wouldn't have experiences in other districts, in order to make it a richer mentorship. So maybe a person who does this job that I might have met at meetings would be appropriate. Probably not somebody in the district.

... I guess that I knew it would be a confidential relationship. Even though you would hope that in any instance. But I knew that it was confidential, and I knew that she would give me information she had learned from having worked in other districts over the years. So I guess there was more openness on my part to listen to what she had to say, because she was bringing in new ideas. And, I guess, just the trust. I think the trust factor was stronger because I didn't have to worry that, you know, I didn't have to censor what I was asking.

In considering some viable candidates, Elizabeth suggested that many of her previous professors might have made a more suitable mentor, because she would already have been familiar with their background and reputation. She also felt this would have allowed her to skip over the necessity of forming a relationship before being able to engage in more substantive discussions.

Francis.

Francis explained that while he liked and respected his mentor, he only utilized her expertise occasionally, and that he usually turned to informal mentors, such as his principal, another vice principal, or a principal in his former district, when he had specific questions or concerns. But, when asked about having a choice in the selection, he said that he would not choose a person from the district where he worked because of the nature of some of the peer group discussions. "I wouldn't want my mentor to be the
principal I work with right now. . .because of the things we talk about in our group, not that I would ever knock anyone, it's just the different things that you talk about there, and who you go to for help.”

When asked about whether having a prior professional relationship was important, Francis said that he would only choose a person he had known professionally. If it was going to be a stranger, then he preferred that the State make the choice for him.

In regard to whether his relationship with his mentor was affected by not having had a choice he indicated that he felt lucky that the State had selected a person who was from a different district, but who was very familiar with the district where the subject was employed.

So going into it she actually knew more about the district than I did. She had lived up there and she knew what was going on, and all about the politics there. So actually it was the opposite, she knew more about it than I did going into it. She was connected and she knew my principal, this was the one up there. Basically, she knew all the administrators in the district.

After 1 year Francis took an administrative position in a different district approximately 40 minutes away from the prior district and from his mentor. When asked if this change affected their relationship Francis said that he felt that it did not, because after a year of working together they had formed a solid enough bond that he thought she could still be effective as his mentor. He indicated that this was the reason why he may have felt more comfortable in discussing building or district-specific issues with co-workers during that second year. But he seemed to value his mentor as someone who would listen to his thoughts and concerns.

Because at that point we had already built up our relationship and she knew, and I knew, that we could talk about nearly anything. We had already built that trust with one another, and I would just share with her stories. And the two districts are so different that it was actually very refreshing. So she would just
listen, and it didn't make a difference or change anything. She didn't know . . . obviously she didn't know as much of the politics here, but it really didn't make too much difference.

**Gregory.**

Gregory stated several times that he was extremely satisfied with the mentor that the State had assigned to him. They had quickly established a very close relationship and Gregory felt that their work had been useful to him professionally. He said that he felt no need at all to have any input into the selection process. When asked about the importance of having had any sort of prior professional relationship with his mentor Gregory said that this was not an issue for him due to the fact that he also had very close relationships with his colleagues within his district, and that he felt comfortable in approaching any of them if he needed assistance with anything that was building or district specific.

However, he also acknowledged that if administrators were not so fortunate as to have good relationships with all of their colleagues, then they might have a greater need than he did to work with a mentor from outside of his district, and he surmised that this was the reason why the State preferred to assign mentors from outside the protégé's district.

If I had to choose I honestly would have picked either my principal or one of the other vice principals I was working with at the school. Now, my understanding is that the mentor is there to help you, even if the relationship that you're currently working in doesn't . . . isn't successful. And that's one of the reasons why the person is from outside of the organization, and that makes a whole lot of sense. So perhaps my having someone assigned to me circumvented some potential problems in that way. But my working relationships with everyone at the school are phenomenal, so in the end it wouldn't have been a conflict. But I can see how if something wasn't working out, then having that outside mentor would have been very good.

Gregory felt that having to build a relationship with a mentor from outside of his district was an insignificant issue since he had moved to a new district when he accepted
his administrative position, and had to build a whole new set of professional relationships anyway.

**Helen.**

Helen had switched from being a teacher to vice-principal at the same school, to principal of that building, all within 1 year. She knew her mentor by reputation since he had previously worked in her district, but in a different building. While she liked and respected him, she made it clear that she felt that after completing her first year in the mentoring program, that she was not very satisfied with her mentoring experience. She felt that its usefulness to her was limited by her mentor’s lack of available time. Helen said that any issues of immediate concern had to wait until a peer group meeting because her mentor did not have time to visit her school very often to shadow her, or to stop in at short notice to address a question immediately. For these reasons Helen said that she would have preferred to select her own mentor. For political reasons she would have chosen a mentor who came from outside of her district. “I think I would have stuck with someone from outside the district. Only because, politically, sometimes you don't know who you should talk to within your own district, and sometimes it's not such a good idea.”

Ironically, Helen also formed a close connection with her vice principal’s mentor. In comparing the two later she indicated that the fact that this other mentor had more time available made a big difference. This comparison also led her to acknowledge the importance of personality.

I actually had a one-on-one with her mentor, and really liked her a lot. We sat for about two hours, and just had a really good conversation. I kind of felt like she was . . . and I said to her at the beginning, “I know you're not my mentor, but feel free to jump in and offer advice at any time.” And it was great. So given the
nature of the different personalities, I would say that there are some differences between the mentors themselves.

Helen also addressed the issue of whether she would have preferred a mentor with whom she had a prior professional relationship by saying that she would like someone who was not a complete stranger, but that some distance would also be important for the sake of objectivity.

Obviously, if it was a complete stranger, I wouldn’t have known who they were. If it was someone I was too close to, they wouldn’t have been objective enough. So it would’ve been someone that I just knew or that I knew the reputation of. It would be more than just a stranger.

Ingrid.

At one point Ingrid spoke about the importance of having a mentor who was from outside the district in order to get a more objective view. “The fact that the mentor was someone from out of the district, on one or two occasions, if something came up within the district, and I wasn’t quite sure how to approach it, before approaching someone inside the district, I had a chance to go to an outside, objective person.” However, she also contrasted this advantage with the problems of geography and logistics, and she cited the fact that her mentor was from outside of her district as one of the greatest hindrances to their forming a productive relationship.

And although fairly close geographically, still I needed to logistically work out a way to speak with this person, or meet with this person. Sometimes, I needed to do that at 7:00 a.m. or late at night, to talk on the phone, because during the day both of us had some very, very busy job responsibilities.

Eventually she concluded that convenience won out over other factors, and decided that if she were given the option that she would choose a mentor from within her district. She felt that the trust factor in a mentoring relationship would be important, especially with a mentor from the same district. And she also realized that this puts a
burden on the mentor as well. In addition, she recognized that smaller districts might have fewer mentors available.

I think that if I had the option to choose someone from the district that obviously I would choose someone who I felt I could speak with confidentially, and have as a confidant, and not be concerned about where that would go. The only negative I could see to that is that person could end up feeling put-upon, in that others might, you know, try to ask questions . . . . So I could certainly see where in some cases it might be difficult, depending on the size of the district one was working in, and how many people you have available.

Ingrid had a slightly different view of the issue of confidentiality. She was concerned that she needed to develop a level of trust with a mentor from outside of her district before she felt comfortable sharing confidential information about her own district. She also recognized the give-and-take nature of a mentoring relationship, and she pointed out the importance of having her mentor trust that he could safely share confidential information with her.

I had to really develop a relationship of trust with that mentor, in terms of confidentiality. Because, of course, if we were discussing things that might have been of a sensitive nature within my district, I needed to feel confident that my mentor, and I were discussing whatever my needs were, without discussing the district. So I definitely needed to feel that my mentor and I could have that type of back-and-forth trust. And for my mentor also, if he was going to share anything about where he had previously worked, he had to know that he could trust me to see that information as confidential.

Ingrid felt that having a mentor with whom she had no prior professional relationship was not much of an issue for her because she had no real contacts with any administrators from outside the district, and she assumed that the regulation requiring that the mentor be from outside the district precluded any possibility that she could have established any form of professional relationship with her mentor. But in order to overcome this obstacle she suggested that the State could ask protégés to complete a survey that would allow them to make better matches with prospective mentors.
Because the mentors were someone from out of district, I don't really think that option [of having a prior relationship] would have made much of a difference for me because it would have been someone unknown to me. Anyway, having some type of a survey as to what I would be looking for in a mentor, in order to match up mentors and mentees, might have been nice. But again, I was fortunate that I had a mentor that I got along with very well.

Discussion of Contextual Factor B: Sufficient Time to Develop Relationship

There should be sufficient time to develop the relationship (two to five years).

The questions related to this factor were numbers 5, 10, and 18.

(5) How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

(10) In what ways do you think that the change from a one-year program to a two-year program may have helped or hindered your professional development?

(18) How frequently do you expect to maintain contact with your mentor after the two-year program is officially ended?

Summary of Issues Related to Contextual Factor B

Samier (2000) has indicated that a period of 2 to 5 years is needed in order for a mentoring relationship to be fully established and to serve a useful purpose for the protégé. The program in New Jersey mandates a 2-year period, but it was assumed by all the participants in this study that there was a possibility of maintaining contact with the mentors after the official 2-year period had ended. The first question that the researcher asked on this topic was intended to elicit whether the participants felt that their overall experiences were beneficial enough to them that they might find that the time period they devoted to building the relationship was adequate, or whether they might want to devote even more time to strengthening the relationship. The responses indicate that 4 of the participants felt that the mentoring relationship provided an overall benefit to their
professional development. Bernadette and Catherine were the most positive, and both of them indicated that their mentors had been a great help to them in completing the State’s required activities, as well as in resolving other issues of concern. Elizabeth and Gregory both felt that the nature of the State requirements, which were their mentors’ primary responsibility, were of little value. However, these 2 participants found that their mentors helped them a good deal when they moved on to other activities that were more building-specific. When the focus changed to day-to-day administrative issues, then the mentors became more important to them, and their input was considered very useful.

Andrew, Deborah, Francis, Helen and Ingrid reported that their overall experiences had little or no positive benefit to their professional development. In most cases this was due to the nature of the activities that the participants worked on with their mentors. Although all of the participants reported that they liked their mentors, and that they respected them, these 5 all felt that their relationships were generally unimportant because they thought that they served little professional purpose. An insight that the researcher did not anticipate was that most of those participants who perceived that their relationships had transcended the expectations of the State program were the ones who felt the strongest bonds with their mentors, and they were also the ones who had the strongest expectations of maintaining their relationships after the State timeline had officially ended.

The next question that was related to time spent in working together with the mentors was number 10, which asked about the perceived differences between the 1-year time frame and the new 2-year format. Catherine, Helen and Ingrid gave the most negative responses. They each felt that the added time was a burden. Catherine reported
that the added year caused repetitive peer group meetings when new people joined their group meetings, after her cohort had already been together for a year. Helen and Ingrid were the most outspoken about the fact that the State-mandated tasks were irrelevant to them, and they found that the added year was just more time spent doing tasks they already resented. Deborah, Elizabeth, Francis and Gregory focused primarily on the fact that the added year gave them additional time in which to build stronger bonds with the members of their peer groups. When they reported their opinions about the added year, Elizabeth and Francis did not even refer to their mentors at all, but focused solely on their other relationships. Andrew and Elizabeth also mentioned that the added year was a benefit to them because both had changed jobs during the course of the 2-year period, and they both felt that the extra year made it easier for them to manage the difficulties of changed work requirements. Bernadette also mentioned that she thought the extra year would be beneficial to those administrators who were alone in their buildings, and might need the extra time in order to have more opportunities to confer with another administrator.

In regard to whether the participants felt that they would maintain contact with their mentors after the official 2-year period had ended, Andrew, Gregory and Helen indicated that there was no need for any further contact. All 3 seemed to feel that their relationships terminated along with the State program requirements. Deborah, Elizabeth and Francis all said that they would maintain very occasional contacts, but these were primarily for personal reasons, such as asking about family or sharing holiday greetings, as opposed to staying in touch for any professional reasons. Bernadette, Catherine and Ingrid all expected to maintain professional connections with their mentors after the
official program requirements were completed. In all 3 cases the participants seemed to feel that their relationships had become stronger precisely because they had extended the relationships beyond the program requirements. Those participants who made more use of the protégé-mentor relationship had created a stronger relationship, which in turn had a greater long-term benefit for them as professionals.

The researcher’s general conclusion about this contextual factor is that the perceptions of the protégés dictated whether a longer period of time was necessary. Those protégés who perceived the relationship to be of value to them in their day-to-day professional lives made the greatest use of the time, and had the greatest expectations for continuing the relationships in the future. Those protégés who perceived that the only purpose of the relationship was to accomplish the State-mandated activities were the ones who placed the least amount of value on their relationships. As a result, added time for them would have been irrelevant.

*Discussions With the Participants Related to Contextual Factor B*

*Andrew.*

When asked about the overall usefulness of this relationship to him in terms of professional development, Andrew felt that their time spent together had been only minimally beneficial. He indicated that having more time together would not be of much help at this stage in his career, because his mentor was not currently working as a principal. He did, however, speculate that if he became interested in moving into a central office position at some point in the future, he might seek to resume this relationship when it might be more useful. Having additional time to form a relationship is not currently important, but may become important at another time. But, when the researcher asked a
little later if he expected to maintain contact with his mentor, Andrew was uncertain, and
indicated he thought they would have minimal reasons to stay in touch. “Since he is
retired I don’t know if he’s going to move out of the area. I would think we might stay in
touch by e-mail. But because he lives far away, and he’s retired, I don’t think that we’ll
have regular contact.”

Andrew clearly recognized that having an additional year allowed him to establish
a stronger relationship with his mentor. In addition, he also felt that the extra year was
especially beneficial to him in that he had spent his first year as a vice principal and then
moved to principal’s position at the start of the second year. “In my case it helped
because I was a vice principal for 1 year in a district, and then in my second year I moved
to an elementary principalship in another district. So it was helpful to have my mentor
working with me, you know, in 2 years, in 2 jobs.”

_Bernadette._

Bernadette indicated that she felt the time spent working with her mentor was
highly beneficial and useful to her professionally. As a result she seemed to be very
satisfied with the amount of time she had to develop the relationship, and seemed to feel
that she and her mentor will continue to stay in touch indefinitely. At one point she said
that she spent much more time with her mentor than other members of her peer group
were spending with their mentors. She speculated that many of them preferred to have
less contact, and spend less time, because that was somehow easier.

I mean I have sent him things constantly, asking what do you think? How do
you think I should word this? Should I go this route? Should I leave this alone?
And he’s been great as far as setting up the parameters for my action research
project. So I think the other people . . . I think they actually like the fact that their
mentors are just kind of leaving them alone, which I find interesting.
When discussing whether a 1 or 2-year program was a better choice Bernadette indicated that she felt the extra year could be a great benefit, especially for administrators who were alone in their buildings. She happened to be a vice principal who worked with another administrator in her building that she considered to be a resource, but she recognized that if an administrator lacked that type of partner then the extra year of advice and support from a mentor could be a big help.

I think the 2-year span is fine . . . especially for someone who is in a situation where they are the only administrator in the building, and they may not have somebody. Or they may not trust somebody in the district to go to. I think it’s nice to have that outside person, and to have them for 2 years while they’re still trying to figure things out. I think it’s a fabulous idea.

Bernadette established a very close relationship with her mentor during the course of the 2-year period they worked together. She surmised that they would be in touch often, and she said she would not hesitate to reach out to him in the future, if the need arose. She also speculated that her mentor might be the first one to make contact, and that he had a fatherly interest in seeing that she was doing all right. “But knowing him, he’ll be contacting me. He’ll probably contact me before I contact him, because he’s like the fatherly figure, ‘How’s everything going?’ Making sure my kids are OK, that sort of thing.”

Catherine.

Catherine felt that her relationship with her mentor had evolved to the point where he could present her with various options, which she could consider, and then choose the course of action that was most suitable. She seemed to value his input a great deal, and turned to him for assistance on highly sensitive issues. This level of trust took time to
develop, and resulted from working on numerous activities together, over a sustained period of time.

I felt that the help he gave me, when there were questions or challenges in my job... that he was able to direct me. Not direct me, but give me options that I may not have thought about. So I found that working with him was productive. It gave me a little bit of insight. He would relate a challenge that I was having to something he had gone through, and how he had handled it, and so it gave me another perspective on a particular problem that I may have been dealing with.

Interviewer: Could you give me a specific example?

Yes, a Board of Education member's wife was hired this year in our school. And she really was not doing a great job, and it was really a very sticky situation. I was dealing a lot with her one-on-one, and trying to mentor her, and trying to help her through the situation. And I wasn't quite sure how to handle this. I spoke to my principal, and he was very supportive. He saw the same sort of things that I was seeing. So, in speaking to my mentor, we sort of went through the different scenarios. That... first of all, how we could help her through the year. And, if that didn't work, you know, what would happen. It was a challenge.

Despite the fact that Catherine benefitted from having formed a close bond to her mentor she indicated that she felt the change to a 2-year program was not beneficial because she found it to be very repetitive. She reported that a number of individuals entered her peer group who were just beginning the program, and that this resulted in their having to cover topics she had done before or listen to speakers she had heard before. “Because what’s happening in my peer group is that there are new mentees that are coming in, because mentors are now winding down with one group, and they’re taking on other mentees, and so there’s been a bit of repetition in our peer mentoring group because they want to cover, or they want to go over the same kinds of things that they did with us initially.”

Catherine felt that she would continue to maintain a relationship with her mentor. She felt that she could contact him at any time, and that he would always be available to
her: ". . . he's told me that I can call on him whenever, wherever. So I think it definitely will continue. He'll be there if I need him." Although she established a bond very quickly, she indicated that she expected it to continue well into the future.

**Deborah.**

Deborah had a slightly less positive feeling about the mentoring relationship because she felt that, although she liked her mentor as an individual, she was too removed from her immediate situation for them to collaborate on building-specific concerns. "Personally, I thought my mentor was fabulous, but professionally with not being in the building, not experiencing the day-to-day routines, and not knowing the population of parents or the student population, it didn't serve as broad a purpose as I thought it should."

In regard to the difference between a 1-year and a 2-year program, Deborah never mentioned her mentor at all, but she said that the greatest benefit for her was having a longer period in which to form relationships with the other members of her peer group.

One thing I felt was very helpful was the networking component of the monthly peer group meetings. The mentors in our group worked very hard to plan those meetings. Some familiar faces, we could network, the meetings were about an hour and a half long. So the meetings were short, but it was still a great chance for conversing with fellow administrators. And I liked having that continue into the second year. I even remember going to some other professional workshops or meetings around the state and seeing a familiar face and saying, "Hey, I know you." So that was a benefit of going into the second year and keeping that bond alive. I don't know if we would have had the same connection with just a 1-year program.

Although Deborah seemed to have liked her mentor, she indicates that they will probably only touch-base about once a year just "to say hello." The inference here is that the participant may have liked her mentor, but that they never formed a close enough relationship during their time together for Deborah to feel much connection to the
mentor. But since she reports that she formed slightly closer relationships with members of the peer group during the same time period, the difference appears to have been a lack of time spent working on activities that Deborah felt to be of importance in her day-to-day professional life. Therefore, having a greater length of time together may not have ever permitted them to establish a closer relationship.

*Elizabeth.*

It should be noted that Elizabeth had changed mentors after starting the program, and after changing her position. However, Elizabeth reported that she valued the relationship she formed with her mentor, despite the fact that they had less time together than some of the other subjects interviewed. Although Elizabeth had previously stated that she might consider having a past faculty member serve as a mentor, she drew a distinction between a faculty observer and a mentor. "I would say that working with my mentor, and being able to call her or e-mail her without her having to come and observe me, it was effective. I think it was the personal contact, you know, just the one-on-one... it was effective."

Elizabeth also seemed to feel that the additional time she spent in the program was primarily useful in allowing her to establish a closer bond with the members of her peer group, as opposed to seeing it as an opportunity for forming a closer bond with her own mentor. Referring to the change to a 2-year program she said, "I think it helped because it required me to go to the meetings. I think that was one of the most effective parts of the whole program—going to the meetings—sitting around listening to your colleagues who are in the same situation as you, sitting around listening to the experts, the other mentors."
In reflecting on whether she would be maintaining ties with her mentor after the official 2-year program had ended, Elizabeth said that she expected to touch base with her mentor, probably a couple of times each year. However, she added that her contacts would be more for personal reasons—“probably around the holidays”—than for professional purposes. Therefore, it appears that the prospect of having additional time in order to establish a professional relationship seemed to be unimportant to her.

Francis.

Francis also indicated that while he liked his mentor personally, he had not regarded her as someone that he turned to for everyday issues of concern. He indicated that he formed stronger bonds with co-workers in his own building that had a better understanding of their own specific issues. In this instance, having a greater period of time in which to build a relationship probably would not have made very much difference, since the mentor’s lack of specific expertise seemed to be too great a barrier.

I thought she was a great woman. I mean she’s knowledgeable about education, she understands all the politics that are behind it. And she is very knowledgeable about curriculum, and that whole process. She understands the morals that are associated with education. Like I said, the only thing... and she tried. It was with specific issues with let’s say a parent or a child. Where she might have said, “you might try this,” or “this is how I would have handled it,” or “this is what I’ve seen work.” So that would be the only thing. Again, like I said, not that she didn’t try to help me—she did give me suggestions. But I don’t know how... I found myself leaning more towards the principals I’ve worked with over the last two years, which I would have anyway. They had more useful information in terms of dealing with specific issues relating to parents or kids.

In reflecting on the change from a 1-year to a 2-year program Francis concurred with other participants when he said that the additional time was primarily useful to him in forcing him to form stronger ties to the other members of his peer group. He never
mentions anything at all about his relationship with his mentor becoming stronger because of having more time to work together with her.

I thought 2 years was fine, and it gave . . . it almost forces you to have a network and to meet these people. Whereas, if you didn't have to do it, I don't know if I would have made the time, because you get caught up in other things. But if you know that you have a peer meeting on say, April 27, at four o'clock, you put it in your schedule, and you're there for it . . . So that was good and over 2 years, you're really building relationships. In the first year you're really just learning who each other is [sic]. But then in the second year I really found myself talking to other people a lot more, and finding out about their schools, and calling them and e-mailing them . . . Just a few weeks ago, somebody called me and said he wanted to find out what kind of discipline system I had here. So I think it's good in terms of networking. I got to build better and stronger relationships with other principals I might have never had.

In regard to maintaining ties with his mentor, Francis also seemed to feel that his relationship would be more of a friendship than a professional relationship. He makes it clear that he does not see her as a professional resource, so having more time to build a relationship seemed to be unimportant. "I would think we'll stay in touch to some degree. . . . We do still touch base and she'll ask how I'm doing, and we talk about our families and such—we'll have a quick conversation, and I'll ask how she is."

*Gregory.*

Gregory indicated that he found his mentoring experiences to be very useful. He said that his relationship with his mentor was helpful and productive. It seemed likely that having an adequate time in which to build their relationship was an important factor. It was also evident that the relationship became more valuable to Gregory when it expanded beyond the range of activities prescribed by the State program, and became more personally relevant to him when they focused on specific day-to-day issues.

. . . he was always there with answers to questions that I had, he was always very helpful to say, "Hey, you may want to think about X, Y and Z." And again, he was always focusing in on what my work currently was. So he was helping me
out with the work expectations that were given to me by my principal and my superintendent at the time.

Speaking about the change to a 2-year program Gregory made it clear that he did not need the additional year to form a stronger relationship. He felt that was accomplished right away. But the extra time was helpful to him in that he appreciated having an extra year to gather data supporting his action research project. He also indicates that the added time provided him with additional opportunities for networking, which he seemed to value.

But certainly I don't think I gained anything more in the second year that I hadn't already gotten in the first year. And truthfully, if I called my mentor up 2 years from now, he would help me with anything that I need. I mean the connections I made with my peer group, I could call them any time, and I'm sure they feel the same. Those connections were all established in year one.

However, when Gregory was asked to reflect on how frequently he expected to maintain contact with his mentor, he indicated that they might be in touch about once a year. He seemed to feel that the relationship had been terminated when the requirements of the program had been completed, and that having additional time to work on building any kind of continuing professional relationship was unimportant to him. His response appeared to indicate that the relationship served more of a utilitarian purpose than a personal one. His response also indicated that he saw it more as an occasional arrangement rather than a relationship that he would want to maintain with regular meetings. "We're not exactly on a week-to-week kind of basis, and we weren't even during the process either. So I'd say once a year."

_Helen._

Helen felt strongly that her mentoring experience was lacking in that she did not have an opportunity to form a very strong relationship. She seemed to be primarily
concerned that they were separated by distance and by lack of time. As a result, their meetings did not have the degree of relevance that she would have liked.

... he was available by phone and by e-mail, always. But not available if I were to say, “Can you come over to the building and look at this schedule?” “Can you sit down and go over this budget with me? I didn’t feel like I could ask him to do that, knowing that he had his own building to run. And it’s not like we’re terribly close distance-wise. Our buildings are a good 30 minutes apart, so it’s not like you can just zip around the corner.

Helen stressed that her relationship was an easy one for her personally because she had known her mentor previously. However, she felt that it had very limited professional value for her because of the nature of the tasks they were asked to complete. She indicated that what she really would have preferred would have been a chance to work together in one of their buildings, focusing on more substantive topics.

It’s tough, because you’re not given the time you need to really develop a relationship with your mentor. If I hadn’t known mine previously, I would only know him from the couple of times we’ve been able to get together. You don’t get a chance to really know somebody that way. I don’t know if there’s some way to build in—maybe if the state really wants to get serious about mentoring and if they want it to be somebody from outside of your district, then instead of all this paperwork stuff, build in about 2 or 3 days during the year when the district agrees that this administrator will be given a professional development day to spend with their mentor. Then you’ve got a whole day set aside with that person. Forget all this paperwork.

In terms of having additional contact with her mentor, or having any added time to form a more solid relationship, Helen felt that it had served its purpose, and that there was very little point in having any added contact. Because of her somewhat negative attitude towards the nature of the relationship, and its lack of relevance for her, she did not anticipate that her mentor would have any reason to work with her further, or that he would perceive a need to maintain any type of contact with her. “Honestly this is his last
year before retirement and I don’t know if he’s looking to maintain any kind of relationship, once this year of mentoring is over.”

Ingrid.

Ingrid had a particularly negative impression of her mentoring relationship. While she liked her mentor, and even felt that he had many valuable things to share with her, she felt that the eight explorations, and the other activities they had done together, had been largely a waste of time. Ingrid made it clear that she felt that her participation in the program had not been of any benefit to her at all. Based on this negative viewpoint, it is unlikely that spending more time together would have made her feel that the program was any more beneficial.

In terms of professional development, I’m not really convinced that the mentoring component enhanced my professional development. It was certainly a positive relationship, in terms of having someone to run things by, but in terms of actual professional development, I don’t think that the mentoring process was really helpful.

Again, in speaking about the change to a 2-year program, Ingrid indicated that the extra year had simply prevented her from taking advantage of other opportunities. It seemed that she had no desire to devote any more time to building a stronger relationship with her mentor.

Because I was so busy with this 2-year program, I found that I was not necessarily taking advantages of other opportunities to attend workshops, or other professional development activities that my district generously allows for, because I had other commitments such as meetings I had to attend for this program, and the action research project I needed to keep working on . . . . Time—again.

When reflecting on whether she might maintain contact with her mentor Ingrid seemed to feel that they might have some periodic contact. Despite her feeling that the time spent on the State’s mandated activities had not served any purpose for her, she
seemed to feel that she and her mentor had become friendly, and that her mentor could be a resource for her. She said that they might be in touch once or twice a year, and in fact, she mentioned that she had just called her recently with a question. This indicated that having a period of a couple of years in which to form a relationship actually did allow her to establish a bond that she might use later, once being freed from what she considered to be the constraints of the State requirements.

I'm hoping that we can continue a professional collaboration. You know, someone to speak to on an occasional basis. I don't expect to be speaking with my mentor as frequently of course. But I certainly hope that we stay in touch.

Discussion of Contextual Factor C: Opportunity to Negotiate Goals and Activities

Regulations and procedures allowing them (mentors and protégés) to negotiate goals and activities.

The six questions related to this contextual factor were as follows:

(2) Did your experience with your mentor meet your expectations? Why or why not?

(4) Would you have preferred that your work with your mentor encompassed more or less than the eight explorations and the research project? Explain.

(5) How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

(6) What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for you professionally?

(7) What aspect of your work with your mentor did you find to be least useful to you professionally?
In what ways did it help you professionally to have a mentor’s input on each of the State’s required activities?

Summary of Issues Related to Contextual Factor C

In regard to whether the protégés felt that their experiences met their expectations, the opinions were split fairly evenly. Andrew, Elizabeth, Francis, Helen and Ingrid expressed disappointment that their experiences did not provide them with experiences that they found to be helpful. Andrew felt that he received more input from colleagues in his district. Elizabeth discussed her need for a mentor who had experience in human resources, but when she had been re-assigned to a new mentor she still seemed to find the experience had only minimal value for her. Francis was bothered by the fact that his mentor had no experience as a principal, which made him doubt the validity of much of that mentor’s advice and guidance. Although Helen said that her experiences were positive, all of her examples seemed to contradict that assertion, and it was necessary to read between the lines to find her true feelings, which seemed to be disappointment that there were not more opportunities for open-ended discussions. Lastly, Ingrid made it clear that she felt that much of the work she prepared for her mentor had little professional value. In all of these cases the protégés described experiences where mentors conducted sessions with narrowly defined goals and activities. In each of these cases the protégés described positive and useful aspects of the mentoring experience as being almost accidental or incidental to the completion of the State requirements.

Bernadette described her experiences very differently. For her the eight explorations and the action-research project were simply jumping off points, and her mentor encouraged her to bring her own issues of concern into each of their discussions.
Catherine had the advantage of knowing her mentor in advance, which allowed her the luxury of feeling more latitude to ask for greater input into decision-making than some of the other protégés. Deborah felt that she was given the opportunity to choose some of the discussion topics, which made her feel that the sessions were productive and useful. Gregory indicated that he was generally satisfied with his experiences, which seemed to be due to the fact that open-ended discussions with his peer group were particularly enjoyable. For the most part he was simply relieved that his mentor had few expectations, and largely left him alone. Since this was his preference, he obviously felt that his mentor heeded his preferences, even if it was only by accident.

All of the protégés were unanimous in stating that the eight explorations were their least favorite part of the mentoring experience. Several of them felt that they were too much like the material they had already covered in prior graduate courses. The mentors that used these explorations as discussion starters, and then encouraged more free-flowing dialogues, left their protégés feeling slightly less frustrated by the State requirement. However, those mentors who approached the explorations in a more rigid manner, and who asked for much more extensive documentation, left their protégés feeling angry and resentful about the experience. It was clear that those protégés who had less opportunity for input of their own, and who had less opportunity to engage in more open-ended discussions, also found this requirement to be more burdensome.

When describing the overall usefulness of their mentoring experiences there was a slightly greater difference of opinion. That was almost always due to the fact that the more opportunity the protégés had for input the more they were able to make the experience a meaningful one. That was especially true for Bernadette, who even related
an anecdote of how she had moderated a peer group meeting in her mentor’s absence. Andrew was generally positive because he felt that he had made a valuable connection that might be helpful to him later in his career. Catherine, Elizabeth, and Gregory gave more qualified answers. Each of them said that parts of the experience had been useful to them. In particular, all 3 cited the times when they were given the opportunity to explore their own issues of concern, or to compare notes about day-to-day issues in their various buildings. But Deborah, Francis, Helen, and Ingrid were the most negative regarding the usefulness of their experiences. Deborah and Francis both said that there was not enough latitude allowed by their mentors to bring other topics into the peer group discussions. Helen and Ingrid echoed this complaint, but were even more adamant that the lack of open discussions or the more heavily proscribed writing assignments were actually counter productive in that they took valuable time away from the protégés at a point in their careers when they thought they had the least time to spare.

When each of the participants was asked to reflect on what aspect of mentoring they had found to be most useful to them professionally their responses also indicated a good deal about how much input they felt they were allowed by their mentors. Andrew, Bernadette, and Deborah all indicated that they felt that their mentors had been most helpful in assisting them with completing the State requirements. To varying degrees these participants had found the process to be daunting, and they credited their mentors with assisting them in completing the various components in a manner that the State would find acceptable. Catherine and Ingrid said that they were especially glad for the opportunity to network. Not only did they appreciate forming ties with the other members of their peer groups, but they also thought that the connection with their mentor might
also be useful to them later on in their careers. Andrew had mentioned this benefit earlier, although it was not what he cited as the most important benefit of his mentoring experience. Francis said that he most appreciated his mentor's wisdom and her political talents. He also cited the discussions with his peer group. Elizabeth, Gregory, and Helen also cited discussions with peer groups as most important.

When each of the participants was asked to reflect on the aspect of mentoring that had been least useful to them, their answers once again indicated the amount of freedom they had been given to negotiate these requirements. Everyone, except Bernadette, expressed some degree of frustration or anger with how their mentor had approached the required activities. In some cases they were not permitted any input at all, and described their feelings that the paperwork had been a burden and a drain on their already limited time. Others spoke about their opinions that the quality of work in their peer groups was not very good, and that some of their peers were doing a minimum amount of work in order to simply fulfill a requirement. The lone dissenter was Bernadette, who could not think of anything negative to say about her experience. Interestingly, she was also the one person who described how she had discussed her concerns about the requirements with her mentor, and how they had negotiated the manner in which these would be completed.

Finally, the researcher asked the participants about whether they found the mentors to be helpful to them in completing the State requirements in order to ascertain whether they thought that their mentors were receptive to any input that they may have allowed the protégés to contribute. To varying degrees almost all the participants said that their mentor was helpful to them. Andrew, Deborah, Elizabeth, Francis, Gregory, and Ingrid reported that their mentors had helped them at least a little bit with completing the
requirements by ensuring that they were done correctly, and within the required time frame. However, all of these participants also indicated that their mentors had been the ones who interpreted for them how these requirements were to be completed, and who dictated how they should be completed. Therefore, while these participants felt that the mentors had helped them, but they did not necessarily feel that their mentors had allowed them much input into how the activities were to be completed. As a result they reported that this aspect of the mentoring experience was what they considered to be least productive for their professional development. Helen reported that she received assistance from her mentor in completing the requirements. However, she then added the contradictory statement that her mentor was very inexperienced, and that he had to go to other mentors in their group for input before he could give her guidance. As a result she had little room for input, and therefore, despite her positive assertion, Helen was not satisfied with this aspect of her mentoring experience. Bernadette and Catherine were the most positive about the assistance they received from their mentors. Bernadette had clearly had much input into how the requirements were to be completed. Catherine felt that her mentor was willing to listen to her more frequently because of their prior professional relationship, and she expressed the opinion that her mentor was generally receptive to her ideas and opinions.

**Discussions With the Participants Related to Contextual Factor C**

*Andrew.*

Andrew indicated in several places that he generally found the work sessions with his mentor to be less than satisfying. Instead of having real input as to the topics or activities he would be working on, Andrew spoke about being bored by discussions that
he found off-topic or unimportant. He made clear that he liked his mentor, but that for assistance with more relevant issues, he turned to colleagues within either his school or his district.

Well, the sessions have gone extremely long. A typical session for us is three hours in length. The mentor will go on and on and on, beyond where I’m concentrating. And really starts to tell war stories that kind of go beyond what I think I need to hear . . . I really feel my true mentors this year, and last year, are my colleagues, the other principals that I’m working with, who I’m in touch with almost daily.

Andrew also indicated that he found the eight explorations and the action research project to have been merely exercises, without any particular value to him professionally. The interviewer had to remind him what the eight explorations were, and Andrew replied that he thought he remembered going over those in an early meeting with his mentor. In reference to the project, Andrew said that it was quite a burden when combined with his other work responsibilities. “I feel that the research project is too extensive. I feel that because of the typical 12-hour days that I’m spending as a second-year principal, to do the research project on top of that I feel is excessive.” In terms of overall usefulness to him for professional development, Andrew said that having a superintendent as a mentor meant that the guidance he received had little bearing on his needs as a principal, but that he might benefit from having formed this relationship if he decided to change to a new administrative position later on in his career. He did not seem to feel that he was given much if any input into creating the agenda for their regular meetings, which might have caused him to regard their value more positively.

Another means of assessing whether the protégé felt that he had input into setting goals and activities was to ask what he considered to be the most productive aspect of the relationship and what he considered to be the least productive aspect. Andrew said that he
received a good deal of assistance in formulating a topic for his action research, and
guidance as to how the project should be conducted. This response indicates that the
protégé had some input into the research topic. He also indicated that he received some
useful guidance on how to handle a couple of specific crisis situations. The fact that he
had the latitude to discuss these issues indicates that there was some latitude in selection
of discussion topics. However, Andrew felt that the formal portions of the peer group
meetings were proscribed and they seemed to remind him of a classroom session. The
informal discussions afterwards, when the mentor had less input, seemed to have been
more interesting.

The worst aspect for me has been when we get together with our
mentor/mentee peer group. We’ve been reading articles together, and reading
short books together, and doing reports on chapters. And I have found that to be
the least important. What I really value in those sessions is when we do a round
table. And each principal talks about what, you know, each first or second year
principal talks about what their challenges were that week or that month.

Lastly, as a means of comparing the amount of input and level of possible
negotiation of goals and activities, between the protégé and the mentor, Andrew was
asked to discuss the mentor’s input on the State requirements. Andrew indicated that his
mentor kept him on track by reminding him of deadlines, and by moving him through the
various tasks. But it is clear that this mentor felt obligated to remain within the State
parameters, and that Andrew was not offered an opportunity for input or negotiation.

My mentor is a stickler for details. He is more committed to this program than
I am, has been very good at meeting timelines, meeting deadlines, doing his
evaluations for me and of me, so he has kept me on target, absolutely. Where I’ll
be consumed with work, and students and parents, he has kept me on track.
Bernadette.

In regard to having input and control over goals and activities Bernadette indicated that although she and her mentor felt an obligation to work within the State requirements, that she had a good deal of access to her mentor, and that her mentor encouraged a very open-ended relationship that allowed her to discuss anything she felt was important. “He’s never made me feel, like, don’t bother me with this. He has been there 110 %.”

When discussing the State requirements Bernadette indicated that she felt them to be somewhat overwhelming, and that there was not much latitude about how they were to be completed. It also seemed that she felt them to be more of a burden than something that she found to be useful in terms of her professional development.

So I felt that what the State . . . I think they had good intentions. They felt that everything that we were supposed to do was already embedded in our profession and in our job. It doesn’t turn out that way because you have to document, document, document. And then with this action research project, I would be doing what I’m doing for my action research project, but to have to write it up and to present it, it is a lot. And I feel that if they want administrators to be successful, they would not require all of this. I feel like I’m doing a mini-thesis again. And I would hope that the State would want us to be focusing on our job, and learning what we should do to become a strong administrator, rather than doing all this paperwork.

Bernadette also reflected on how she and her mentor had approached the State requirements. She made it clear that her mentor felt that there was very little latitude regarding how they were completed. She mentioned that there was a concern that the State might ask to see evidence of completed work items, and that he didn’t want her to experience any future problems with missing documentation. Interestingly, she also pointed out her observation that not all mentors in her cohort had been so scrupulous. She said that other peers had not taken the requirements so seriously, perhaps under the
assumption that no one would ever be checking their work for completeness. But Bernadette did make it clear that, as much as was possible within the confines of the State requirements, her mentor had allowed her to select a topic that was relevant to her, and that she had been given opportunities for input into the way that it was prepared and presented. As a result she felt that the action research would be a benefit to her professionally. Then, somewhat paradoxically, she concluded this reflection by saying that perhaps there needed to be an increased amount of State oversight of the process in order to ensure that all mentors and protégés were being held to the same standard.

It’s quite interesting because the other mentors . . . you can see the differences in how they are, and what they expect from their mentees. I have to say that my mentor really is following everything by the book. Whatever is required by the State, he’s following. Part of it is because he’s very conscientious, and that’s just the kind of educator he is. And part of it is because we’re the first cohort, and I think he doesn’t want anyone to come back and say well, we didn’t do this. And we don’t know what the State is going to require as proof, in a sense . . . So my relationship and my experiences with him have been very positive.

Interviewer: Have people in your peer group had less positive experiences?

I wouldn’t say they’ve had less. What I can say is I feel it’s been very casual. I feel that they’ve been able to . . . some of their action research projects were quite thin, and it’s because their mentor said, “just do something quick, and get it done with.” And, see, that’s the kind of person I am too. I can’t do it just to do it. It’s got to be presentable. I won’t just say . . . and plus, I’m doing a lot of research for my own purposes and not just for this project. So I think it’s been very positive for my professional development. And he’s been wonderful with the action research project. I mean I have sent him things constantly, asking, “What do you think? How do you think I should word this? Should I go this route? Should I leave this alone?” And he’s been great as far as setting up the parameters for my action research project. So I think the other people . . . I wouldn’t say less. I think they actually like the fact that their mentors are just kind of leaving them alone, which I find interesting. And I think that’s a flaw in the State’s requirements. I don’t know how they would better monitor that. But I think they should assure that the mentors are doing the same thing, and requiring the same things. I don’t know how that’s going to work.
When discussing the most and the least beneficial aspects of the mentoring relationship Bernadette indicated that she found her mentor’s assistance with the action research project was particularly important. She said that there were no aspects she considered to be least useful to her. But she pointed to the peer groups as being another aspect of the program that was useful to her. The reason for that was because her mentor had organized the sessions into productive and stimulating opportunities for sharing and discussion. Without his doing that unbidden, she felt that the peer group meetings would have been far less useful. This clearly indicated that her mentor felt the need to set goals for the group, and to plan activities independently. Her mentor seemed to have crafted the group discussions in such a way that the protégés then had input into steering the discussions to topics that were of concern and interest to them, which allowed them some freedom within the process. In one case he put his protégé in charge of running the meeting in his absence.

I have to say he was the leader of our peer group. If he didn’t show up then people were looking around and no one knew what we should be doing. He used to . . . I shouldn’t say used to, he still does, but he wasn’t at our last meeting, so he put me in charge of it. But he would come to our meetings with an agenda, and something for us to do because he felt, well, we’re here, we need to make it productive. The meetings were always an hour long, but he always made sure it was a productive hour.

Lastly, when discussing how her mentor’s input on the requirements made a difference, Bernadette discussed her initial panic when she saw the scope of what lay ahead of her, at the same time that she was facing competing pressures personally and professionally. But she found that one of the greatest benefits of having a mentor was that he worked with her to negotiate an approach to the requirements that was manageable. In addition, she also talked about how different her experience was from that of other
members of her cohort, whose mentors may not have helped them to negotiate requirements effectively.

I found that it was extremely helpful to have his input because . . . it was funny. You know, they have that log they want you to fill out. That alone stressed me, when I looked at that log. And, just to give you a little bit of background, when I took the job, a month later after signing I found out I was pregnant. OK, so here I am starting a brand new position, I have to tell my new boss that I’m pregnant, and then I find out all the requirements I have to do with this mentoring. So I’m panicking, because I’m thinking how am I going to do all this? Plus, I’m part time. OK? Last year I was 60 percent. This year I’m 70 percent. So, I was going, oh my goodness. So, when I looked at that log, and I’m reading through it, there was a part of me that said, if I knew I was going to have to do all this I might not have taken it. It was just too crazy a time in my life . . . So I called him right away, and said, you know, I’m not sure how to handle all this, and I’m not sure what I really need to do. And, basically, what I thought was wonderful was he said, “You know what? You don’t have to sit here and write out all the log information. If you have documentation to prove that you’re meeting those requirements, the eight standards, then throw them in a binder, right behind the log page, and be done with it.” He said, “If you want to write a couple of notes you can do that, but in all honesty, if you have documentation then there’s no reason to write everything out.” That took a load off of my shoulders completely, because I felt like, OK, that I can do. Because if I have stuff, instead of having to write it all out, I can just prove I did it then, that’s fine. So I just organized a very nice binder, and I broke up the log, and I did that. So, that alone helped me . . . So, he tried to lighten up our load in that regard, and give us whatever information he thought would help us, and to ease our minds a little bit . . . He’s been wonderful with the State requirements. Whatever he felt was going to be OK with the State, but also, to make us feel like, OK, I can breathe. It’s manageable . . . And another one of the new principals . . . is in a different group [cohort]. But he’s in my peer group. OK, but he has a different mentor. So, it’s kind of interesting because his mentor is very lax as far as requirements. And he did none of that for him. So it’s kind of interesting to hear . . . because we would talk before the mentors would show up. And, to hear the different things . . . But, anyway, my mentor’s been wonderful with helping me.

Catherine.

Catherine had a slightly unique situation in that her mentor had been her principal when she was teaching. In addition, she related that they had seen each other at social occasions, and that her mentor knew of her interest in becoming an administrator for some time before they were paired together. Therefore it is very likely that this mentor
allowed his protégé some latitude in negotiating how they would approach the various requirements. "And he went through the mentoring program to become a mentor and knew that I was going to be going through the program. And so we were able to be paired-up."

In discussing how much attention her mentor devoted to the explorations, Catherine said that those were only a part of their peer group meetings, and that the mentors who conducted her group meetings added other discussion items and guest speakers to the agenda. But she also added that there were topics she would have liked to cover, that were not addressed during her mentoring program. While her mentor apparently exercised some discretion over setting their agendas, there appears to have been some limits to what they covered during one-on-one meetings that left Catherine slightly dissatisfied.

Honestly, the explorations, I don't know if I really felt that they helped me as much as actually working with my mentor. You know, that part of it . . . I just felt that it wasn't as helpful. We did some of the explorations in our peer groups. But it was . . . the other things we did in the peer groups I felt were much more helpful. We had different speakers. We shared a lot of different experiences, and I received more out of that than going through the explorations.

. . . Perhaps in certain areas maybe I would have done a little bit more. A little bit more hands-on with scheduling and budgeting kinds of questions.

When she was asked about her impressions of what was most helpful and what was least helpful, Catherine related a story about a specific problem that she had taken to her mentor for advice and guidance. It was clear that her mentor allowed her a good deal of flexibility in choosing discussion topics, both individually and in their peer group meetings. She went on to say that these group meetings, with their open agenda, were the most useful part of the mentoring experience, as well as the fact that they provided an
opportunity for networking. She contrasted those meetings with the time spent on the
more formal State requirements, which she characterized as something similar to a
classroom assignment. She also points out that some mentors were much less open than
others to negotiating how these requirements were to be completed.

When we had the peer-mentoring groups we would address some of those
issues that were in the explorations, but we did it in a different way. It was more
than just the paper and pencil aspect of it, and I know that this other Vice
Principal I work with, he had it even worse than I did. I mean his mentor . . . both
of us were in it for the very first time ever, and I didn't have to do a whole lot of
in-depth writing, for the explorations, but he did. I mean it was like a term paper
for each one.

Finally, Catherine reiterated that she had found the open-ended discussions to be
the most helpful part of her mentoring experience, which emphasized once again the fact
that her mentor had provided numerous opportunities for the protégé to set the agenda for
many of their discussions. She felt that having the opportunity to explore various
alternative options for dealing with issues gave her a better insight into how to handle
difficult problems. That opportunity also made her feel that she had input into choosing at
least some of the activities in which they were engaged.

*Deborah.*

Before starting the mentoring program Deborah had been apprehensive about
completing the State requirements. But she said that she relaxed when she found that her
mentor planned to keep their meetings very informal, and that she would be given the
opportunity to negotiate the schedule and to bring issues of her own to their discussions.

Things were actually very relaxed, and she allowed me the opportunity to
develop my own ideas, and to share them as time went by, instead of having some
set schedule. I was able to touch base with her when something was coming up,
or at the culmination of an activity.
In regard to the explorations and the action research project Deborah said that she had been given the freedom to select a topic that she was already doing at her school, but that the presentation requirements had been a bit overwhelming. She also described the explorations as being useful to her professional development. She indicated that this was true because of the nature of their peer group discussions. The protégés had the opportunity to use these discussions as jumping off points to address their individual issues of concern.

My research project was a natural component of what I was doing anyway, but it seemed very overwhelming to think that I was going to have to do this huge additional project. But the eight explorations were a little more useful, and they helped me to clarify my role as an administrator. So I would have preferred to pull back on the action research project, just because it was an awful lot to do, when your plate’s already full.

However, Deborah made it clear that a major limitation of her mentoring experience was that her mentor did not help her with any day-to-day issues, or specific problems. “She reminded me often that she had never dealt with a population like the one in my town. So I don’t know that she knew a lot about the population, or about the demands of the population that I was dealing with.” She said that the main focus of their meetings was to get through the State requirements. It was apparent from Deborah’s comments that this mentor required a great deal of documentation. Although she had the freedom to choose her topic, perhaps if she had been given more input into how they tackled this project, Deborah might have felt that it was not quite so overwhelming.

When asked about what was most useful in this program Deborah could not identify anything specific, but instead said she felt her mentor had given her a good deal of positive encouragement. “I think it would be all the additional positive support. Just to know that someone was always rooting for me.” However, Deborah identified her project
as the least useful part of the mentoring program, despite the fact that she would have
done this research for her school whether it was required or not.

That would definitely be the action research project. Although it was a good
thing to have a goal that I was working towards, that was productive. It seemed to
be too much to take on. Going from the classroom to a new position, and having
to keep up with all the demands of that, and then also have [sic] to do an action
research project, it just became too much.

It was not surprising that Deborah’s perception of how her mentor had helped her
focused on how she had guided her through the requirements, rather than on the mentor
as someone who had encouraged her to widen the scope of their interactions to include
her day-to-day topics of concern. As a result it seemed that their relationship was limited
to simply completing the State requirements in an efficient manner.

Again, it was having somebody who is experienced, who could provide
feedback and guidance. I liked having somebody who gave me input on what I
was doing without trying to tell me how to do every single step, but who just gave
me a little guidance in the right direction.

*Elizabeth.*

With respect to the issue of being able to negotiate goals or activities, Elizabeth
indicated that her biggest concern was that the mentor would impose a large number of
requirements. She said that she made it clear to her mentor that this was a concern to her,
and it appeared that her mentor had acceded by keeping their interactions somewhat
limited.

I remember hoping that the person was going to provide me with support that
maybe somebody in the district couldn't provide me with, you know, given their
background. I was hoping that the person would be nurturing and help me to
identify the weaknesses that I had as a novice administrator, and I don't know if
this is applicable, but I was hoping to have somebody who wouldn't be so
demanding on my time, because you know being a new administrator is
overwhelming as it is.
... my 2 years of being mentored did meet my expectations with respect to the person who was providing me with support, and without the person being too overbearing. So, that's a big yes.

In speaking about the peer group meetings Elizabeth indicated that there had not been much latitude in how the cohort approached their research projects. As a result, Elizabeth said that she and the other members of her peer group had found the project to be a burden, despite the fact that hers was also a topic related to her current administrative duties.

Even though the research project was job-embedded I felt that it was inappropriate to ask someone who has already gone through a Masters in education to then have to go back and complete an additional research project.

... for most people they expressed time demands as far as being a new administrator, being out at night events, being able to balance the job and other responsibilities, and the research projects seemed to be very stressful for everyone. And even though everyone provided a good report, which we all learned from, I think that the explorations were enough, because we were all discussing these and doing research, and I felt that the research project was really a little redundant given the explorations and a little excessive given the time demands of a new administrator.

Elizabeth later returned to the topic of the interactions she had with her mentor. Although she says that she appreciated the fact that the mentor didn’t feel a need to visit her district, she adds that she liked having close contact with her. “I would say that working with my mentor, and being able to call her or e-mail her without her having to come and observe me, it was effective. I think it was the personal contact, you know, just the one-on-one.” As Elizabeth went on to explain the nature of their communications, it seemed that what she recalled as most useful to her were those interactions in which she was allowed to choose the topics of discussion.

It was probably just the coaching aspect where she would say, “So, what are you dealing with this week?” She would want to know if I was going to have to fire somebody or if there was going to be a difficult discussion with somebody.
She would ask me, “What have you done to prepare for it? What do you think you’re going to say?” You know, she would listen to me and we would go back and forth a little bit.

Elizabeth later repeated that the least useful aspect of the experience for her was the action research project. It appeared that this was the part of the program she had disliked most because it was the one that had the greatest number of formal requirements, with the least amount of latitude for negotiating the form it would take, or how it would be presented.

As was the case with Deborah, who said that having a mentor interpret how to complete the formal requirements was particularly useful, Elizabeth also felt that her mentor had been a great help in this area. “Well, just to have the person’s guidance, because they were trained as a mentor. You know, the expectations were clear . . . as far as the research, and in the explorations.” The implication is, again, that since there was no room to negotiate the research project, the mentor’s role shifted to that of someone who could guide her past any pitfalls. But her obvious dislike for the project indicated that although she was able to pick the topic, she never felt any freedom to negotiate the way in which this activity would be completed. As a result, she never referred to the project as a useful or productive component of the mentoring program.

*Francis.*

Francis found it difficult to identify many examples of times he had been given input into setting goals or negotiating activities during his mentoring program. His initial problem was that the mentor to whom he was assigned had never been a building administrator. This meant that their dialogues were necessarily limited by his mentor’s lack of experience with issues that might have been topics of concern for the protégé. “So
some of the things I was going through we could talk about and she had ideas and
suggestions, but she'd never really been there herself, so that made it a little more
difficult."

As a result of the mentor's lack of building-level experience, most of their
interactions were focused on the peer group meetings and the more formal requirements.
During those meetings there was, again, little opportunity for negotiating how the
protégés would complete the explorations. A touch of resentment seemed apparent when
Francis compared activities his group did to those of other groups he heard about later.

I found the eight explorations to be somewhat tedious at times. Like I didn't
have enough to do already? And we actually had to go through and write them all
out. And I understand from talking to people in other groups that maybe they
didn't do it quite the same way. But in my group, we did go through each of the
eight explorations on our own and wrote them out, and then talked about them
and it took a lot of time. But I didn't have a lot of time during the day, because of
dealing with other issues. So I spent a lot of my time off working on it. When I
had a couple of weeks off, I found myself coming in to work on days that I had
off just to work on that, which, again, is something that is required, so of course I
did it.

... In talking to people who were in other peer groups, they used them as a
springboard for discussions when they went to their meetings. It was "Think
about these sets of questions or this one exploration, and all the related
information on it, and when we get back together we're going to talk about these
things." Not where you had to necessarily write out all of the answers. And in
some way I think there might be more value to doing it that way. You're trusting
that other people are all professionals, and that they're going to look into these
things. So I think it's important to cover these, but should we spend as much time
as we did on it? I don't know. Maybe my time could've been better spent on
something else.

Where some of the protégés were able to point to dialogues with their mentors as
an opportunity for them to choose the topic of discussion, Francis found that he had to
turn to others for that type of support. "I found myself leaning more towards the
principals I've worked with over the last 2 years, which I would have anyway. They had
more useful information in terms of dealing with specific issues relating to parents or kids."

Later in our interview Francis again returned to the topic of the explorations. He expressed his unhappiness with how his mentor had required that these be completed, and then added that if he were a mentor himself he might allow for more open-ended discussions with protégés instead.

I would have to look at those explorations a little more closely now. I think I would look to pare them down a little bit. I would want to look at them a little bit more . . . maybe more general topics, what you could look into a little bit more, but maybe not have to write it all out. It takes so much time to have to write everything down. Maybe just give them some guidelines, you know, "Here's what I want you to go and find out, and then come back and share with us, in regards to what they do in your district."

When our discussion turned to the peer group meetings, Francis began to find more positive things to say. Not surprisingly he described the open discussions as being meaningful and productive. When the topic was suggested by one of the participating protégés, and when all of the mentors present took turns sharing ideas and suggestions, the subject seemed to be much more interested and enthusiastic.

Just hearing all of the other beginning administrators in my group tell stories about what they were going through was great. I would think, "Boy, I really have it easy compared to what they're going through." Sometimes they would share situations, and how they might have handled it [sic], and I would think how I might have handled the same situation. One of the other mentors in our group—one is a current superintendent who kind of went through the ranks of administration, and he was able to shed light on a lot of situations, or give feedback about a middle school problem, and he had kind of been there and done that. The other 2 mentors, same situation. They currently are both building administrators. They could give a more hands-on experience kind of answers. They'd also been there and done that. So I thought it was very helpful . . . you're getting ideas from everywhere.
This change in attitude makes it apparent that having input into the topic of discussion made a significant and positive difference in how Francis perceived this part of his mentoring experience.

Gregory.

Initially, Gregory began by explaining that he had hoped for a mentor who could guide him through the State’s requirements as efficiently as possible. His second expectation of a mentor was someone who wouldn’t require too many meetings or extra work.

He did guide me through any of the paperwork I needed to complete. And in fact, since he seemed to be the point person for whether or not the paperwork was complete or not, as opposed to sending it on to a committee, that part turned out to be very easy.

... On the one hand, I was looking for certain of the paperwork requirements to be extremely tedious and onerous, the weekly log of what I had to do, like connecting the standards to my job, I found to be extremely painful. Not only did I have to do all of that in my graduate program. Not only did I have to prove that I understood the process when I sat down for the six to eight hour assessment that I needed to do for my principalship, but apparently that wasn't enough, I now had to do it all over again. That part I hated, to be perfectly honest with you. So, what I was hoping for out of my mentor was that he wouldn't hover over me constantly, who wouldn't expect me to do tons and tons of things for him. But rather would check in with me periodically, and who would be there for whatever questions I had. And not necessarily someone who would create more work for me when I was already overwhelmed with the work I had as a new vice principal. And I feel like he did.

Although Gregory seemed to be generally satisfied that he and his mentor established the type of relationship he was hoping for, it was also apparent that he felt that there was little or no opportunity for him to have input into the activities, or to negotiate how they were accomplished. And his frustration with that lack of input was very apparent.
When Gregory spoke about the most positive aspect of his mentoring experience he focused on the discussions of topics that he initiated, and that were related to his current administrative responsibilities.

Again, he was always there with answers to questions that I had, he was always very helpful to say, "Hey, you may want to think about X, Y and Z." And again, he was always focusing in on what my work currently was. So he was helping me out with the work expectations that were given to me by my principal and my superintendent at the time. So everything we dealt with in that regard was very pertinent and I think very helpful.

In addition, Gregory was also enthusiastic about the peer group meetings, where, again, he had the opportunity to interact with a group in an informal discussion.

I think the group meetings, our cohort group, were very positive. Being able to get together with other people, to get out of the office for a little bit, to have time to reflect with them and with the mentor, I'd say that was the most helpful. That was probably the most important part of it for me.

When we spoke about the aspects that were least useful to him, Gregory returned once more to the State's eight explorations and the research project, describing them as redundant and somewhat insulting, as if his previous training had been inadequate. His unhappiness with this aspect of the program was evident, as was the fact that he would have preferred to negotiate how these requirements were completed.

Least useful had to do with all the paperwork we had to complete—the weekly logs, the standards—all the stuff I had done before, and proven myself more than competent to do, but had to do all over again.

Finally, Gregory indicated that although he had no input as to how the State requirements were to be completed, he did appreciate having his mentor interpret those for him. Despite the fact that he was angry about having to complete the State requirements, it was evident that he felt completely confident in the way that his mentor had interpreted how the requirements should be done. "I think that" [guidance from the
mentor] was very good, because otherwise I would have just been just hazarding guesses as to what I was supposed to be accomplishing, so he was able to walk me through that."

_Helen._

Helen initially stated that she was very happy with her mentoring experience. However, she then proceeded to list how it could have been better.

So far my direct experience with my mentor has been great. He's always available by phone or by e-mail. He is also currently working himself. So it's a little bit difficult to get time either in my building or in his building to actually sit down. But I do think he's retiring soon, so hopefully that situation will change a little bit, and he'll have more availability to actually sit down and talk about things. He can actually walk around here a bit and shadow me, and do that kind of thing, and then offer suggestions.

It was evident that she would have liked to negotiate a very different type of relationship, which focused on her day-to-day issues and concerns. This was made more clear when she went on to discuss the quality of work that she saw being generated by other members of her peer group, who seemed to her to be just going through the motions of action research projects in order to fulfill a requirement.

From what I've seen in my peer group of what's been put together as action research projects . . . really looks like, "Okay I needed to do this project so I've put together this PowerPoint presentation to show it to my peer group, and now I'm done." It doesn't go to anybody, and it's not evaluated in any way. Which kind of takes the meaning out of it for me, and makes it more of a, "I just have to get this done." Rather than, "We really want you to get something out of this whole process."

In comparing this view of what was being done in her group to what she had previously described as her preferences, it was evident that Helen felt that she had little input into the way that the work with her mentor was structured, and that there was little room to negotiate tasks or activities with him. Thus, the usefulness of the activities she described was diminished, and they had little or no value for her. She later described her
own project as one that she would be continuing to work on independently, after her mentoring was completed, and that was how she planned to make it more worthwhile and valuable than what she saw presented by her peers.

Once again, when the researcher asked about the overall usefulness of the mentoring experience Helen reported that she liked her mentor. But she then continued by saying that the most useful aspect of the meetings was when she interacted with other mentors about questions and topics that went beyond the explorations. In discussing the least useful aspect of the relationship she also explained that her mentor relied upon her log sheets and other portfolio samples, along with observations of her that had been written by other supervisors, in order to complete his own paperwork. These responses emphasized Helen's lack of satisfaction with the amount of input into decision-making that she was given. She described this part of the process as "meaningless."

I felt really more like I was just giving him the information he needed to write his evaluations for me. You know, I provided him with all the documentation, and all of the observations that were written here by my direct supervisors here and all of that background material that he then used in order to be able to write his observations of me. So I kind of felt like I wasn't getting anything out of that. So it really was kind of laborious on my part, getting all of these documents together, or justifying how I completed different things and just turning all that paperwork over to him. I don't know that it was all that meaningful.

For Helen the digressions from the agenda seemed to be the most productive parts of their meetings.

Even within our peer group there were several other mentors there, who within the discussions provided a lot of real-life examples of things they've been through, how they've handled it. There were lots of discussions about current state law. What was coming up, what we needed to be aware of. The kinds of situations that might really get you into hot water, the kinds of things that might keep you up at night. Those discussions were great.
Finally, when she was asked about the overall usefulness of this program to her professional development, Helen contradicted herself once again by initially saying that it was helpful to her. But then she went on to point out her mentor’s lack of experience. “It was helpful. I think he was also a brand-new mentor, as well as this being a brand-new program. So there were some things that he was kind of unsure of, too, with going through this whole process.” It appeared as if she felt that any useful benefits of her mentoring were simply accidental.

*Ingrid.*

Ingrid also reported that she did not have as much input into the activities she was asked to complete, as she might have liked. In speaking about her initial expectations she indicated that the mentor probably did not help her as much as she might have preferred, because he was from outside of her district. Therefore, she felt constrained to focus more narrowly on the State’s requirements, rather than to negotiate other activities with her mentor. In regard to the activities they completed together, Ingrid explicitly stated this preference. “I think I would have liked to have worked more with my mentor on day-to-day operational side of being a principal, and less on the research project.”

She elaborated further on her opinion of the usefulness of the mentoring she received when we were discussing the eight explorations.

In terms of professional development, I’m not really convinced that the mentoring component enhanced my professional development. It was certainly a positive relationship, in terms of having someone to run things by, but in terms of actual professional development, I don’t think that the mentoring process was really helpful. . . . I felt that the eight explorations areas, in some ways, were a lot of added work, almost a repeat of graduate school. In some ways they got in the way of what I needed to do day-to-day, they almost doubled the work.
Ingrid was very explicit regarding her feeling that the mentoring experience did not serve much purpose for her. "...I'm not really convinced that the mentoring component enhanced my professional development." She continued by saying that although she appreciated some of the networking opportunities, the workload required by her mentor seemed to her to be excessive. It was clear that she did not perceive that she had any input into negotiating activities. Rather, it seemed as if the mentoring activities were taking her away from her work responsibilities, rather than enhancing them.

Just the extreme amount of time required to participate in this program... in terms of the paperwork that was involved, and there was a lot of paperwork. Doing an action research project, although interesting, was again, when trying to learn the ropes of a new job, was all a whole lot of extra work, that in some ways got in the way of the job.

In summarizing her thoughts about the mentoring program Ingrid had only some general opinions. She could not really point to anything specific as being an important benefit. When contrasting that attitude with the feelings she had expressed earlier about the State requirements, it seemed clear that she felt strongly that there was little opportunity for her to have any input into the process. That had the effect of diminishing the mentor's role to that of sounding board and cheerleader.

It's always nice to have someone else's opinions, or to have someone as a sounding board, so I certainly don't think it hurt to have someone to speak with about all those areas, or just to have someone in your corner to say, "Yeah, you handled that well." Or, "You're doing a great job." So, in that way, it was supportive to have someone to speak to.

Discussion of Contextual Factor D: Accommodation to Unique Mentor and Protégé Styles

Accommodation of the diversity and uniqueness of mentor and protégé in styles of thinking and working, in order that the mentor can create experiences tailored to the
unique vision of professional practice, especially those facilitating collaboration and alliances.

The eight interview questions related to this contextual factor were as follows:

(1) What do you recall of your expectations for working with a mentor, before you started the program?

(2) Did your experience with your mentor meet your expectations? Why or why not?

(3) If you ever decide to become a mentor yourself, would you do more than your mentor, less than your mentor, or the same as your mentor?

(4) Would you have preferred that your work with your mentor encompassed more or less than the eight explorations and the research project? Explain.

(5) How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

(6) What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for you professionally?

(7) What aspect of your work with your mentor did you find to be least useful to you professionally?

(17) In what ways did it help you professionally to have a mentor’s input on each of the State’s required activities?

Summary of Issues Related to Contextual Factor D

As to the fourth contextual factor regarding the individualization of activities, and whether the mentors had done enough to forge collaboration and alliances between protégés, there were mixed opinions. Three of the protégés, Bernadette, Catherine, and
Deborah, seemed to feel that their mentors had made an attempt to shape the
requirements to suit their individual needs. They also indicated that they had found the
peer group meetings were conducted in such a way that the protégés were able to form
relationships with their colleagues that they would use again in the future. This happened
as a direct result of intentional planning on the part of the mentors.

Participants Elizabeth, Francis, and Gregory did not find that there was a great
deal of accommodation in regard to how the activities were to be completed. The mentors
had a preconceived view as to how they were to be completed. Although these mentors
were not particularly flexible in how they shaped the activities, they did make an effort to
facilitate collaboration between the protégés. These participants all remarked that they
found the group meetings to be the most productive part of their mentoring experiences.

Andrew, Helen, and Ingrid did not believe that their mentors had been flexible in
shaping the activities, or how they were to be completed. They also indicated that the
peer group meetings were not conducted in such a manner that collaborative relationships
could be formed easily. Rather, they indicated that any relationships that formed were
more likely to have been by accident instead of having been intentionally planned by
their mentors. Interestingly, these three protégés were also the ones who reported the
least overall satisfaction with their mentoring experiences.

*Diplussions With the Participants Related to Contextual Factor D*

*Andrew.*

Andrew reported that he had started the mentoring process full of positive
expectations. He had originally completed the alternate route program in order to obtain
his teaching certificate, and that program has an extensive mentoring component. He
began the administrative mentoring program expecting that the experience would be constructed in a similar manner with the same types of requirements. He expected his mentor to possess a wealth of knowledge and experience. “I feel that talking to a veteran administrator is like opening up an encyclopedia . . .” But then it became clear that while he had liked and respected his mentor, there were issues with the nature of their work together. As related above in the discussion of Contextual Factor C, Andrew asked if his responses would be shared with his mentor. When the interviewer assured him that these responses would not be shared he said that the most helpful mentors were the colleagues that he worked with in his own district. Then he gave a list of the things he would have done differently were he to become a mentor himself.

I would do more shadowing. I would do more modeling. Anyway, I would have shadowing projects so that I could model for my mentee. I would spend less hours, and try and make them, you know, still as rich, still with the amount of material. I would do more with E-mail. I might do something with video or CD’s, DVD’s, where I could say, you know, here’s an example of, you know, a way I’ve seen an administrator handle it.

Also as related in the previous discussion, Andrew indicated that he did not find the work he completed on the eight explorations or the action research project to be particularly useful. He remarked that much of this work might be more helpful to him later if he ever decided that he wanted to switch career paths and become a superintendent. Andrew also thought that the relationships he had formed would be of particular value for future networking, but that he did not anticipate having much contact with his mentor in the near future, other than occasional e-mails. The only thing that he could identify as a particular benefit of the work they completed together was that his mentor helped him to decipher the particulars of state requirements, and ensured that they were completed correctly. At the end of our interview Andrew returned to the topic of
whether the program experiences had been tailored so as to facilitate collaboration and sharing of ideas.

As I’ve said before, I really think that there needs to be more shadowing projects . . . I think that the round table meetings—the peer group meetings need to be more about sharing stories and ideas and strategies so . . . it’s more of a case study course. I don’t think that, you know, reading books and reading chapters and reporting on them is effective. I think that the research project is too lengthy, too extensive. And it also is frustrating to me that the State does, you know, while they have these parameters, rules and regulations, doesn’t seem to really follow through in any way, shape or form to check your work once it’s done.

_Bernadette._

Bernadette started her mentoring program several years after she had completed her course requirements. When she had been in school during the mid 1990’s the mentoring component of the program, in its present form, had not existed. This meant that she had received no prior preparation, other than some informal mentoring she had received as a beginning teacher. When she began the current administrative mentoring program Bernadette expected her mentor to be available to answer situational questions, as they arose. She explained that her experiences in the program had matched her expectations, in that her mentor had made himself available to her, and that he had tailored her experiences in such a way that that there were frequent opportunities for collaboration. She said, “He has been there 110%. So he’s met my expectations . . .”

When reflecting upon whether she would have done anything differently, Bernadette responded that she would have done things in the same way as her mentor. The only exception she might have added would have been cutting back on some of the time required of a protégé, if that option was practical, or if it would be within the parameters allowed by the State. “I think I would require less of my mentees. But that’s if I could do that without the State penalizing them.”
As noted above in the discussion of Contextual Factor C, Bernadette felt that the State requirements had been very difficult, and initially were almost overwhelming. She described how she had negotiated the means by which the requirements were to be completed, in such a way that they became more manageable for her. It was clear that she felt her mentor had tailored the mentoring experience in such a way that it suited her individual needs, and she indicated that she was very satisfied with the overall experience, as she neared the end of the program.

In speaking about the structure of the peer group meetings it was clear that Bernadette's mentor, and the other mentors who were attached to this group, had worked to create opportunities for their protégés that matched their individual needs.

I feel that the peer mentoring groups are good . . . . I personally like that we meet because it's nice to hear what other districts are doing, it's nice to hear you're not the only person feeling crazy. And you also do get to bounce ideas off of other mentors, which is kind of nice too. So that part I like. And obviously I only know how my peer-mentoring group has been run. But some of the other mentors said, "You know what would be really cool? If we sat down, and instead of just discussing things, or reading articles, or whatever, but do "In-box" and "Out-box" type activities, just to see how people would do."

However, Bernadette pointed out that not all cohort groups were operating in this manner, and that some mentors were struggling to reconcile requirements with the needs of their protégés. Then she expressed her belief that other protégés must be struggling to fulfill the program requirements.

. . . And I have to tell you, a lot of the mentors, especially the one from [names a district], but one in particular, is so against the way this was set up, and very vocal about it. And, again, maybe I don't feel as pressured as some of them because I'm not the only administrator in the building, so my workload is divided. But I do, I constantly say to myself, if I was the only administrator in that building, and I had to do everything by myself, and do all of this on top of it, I would be spinning right now.
It was clear that Bernadette considered herself fortunate in having been paired with a flexible mentor who was more willing to create individualized experiences for her. But she considered herself to be unique in that regard, and she knew of other colleagues who did not feel that their mentors had accommodated their styles of thinking and working. It was also evident that she found that her mentor had created collaborative experiences for her and other protégés in her peer group.

Catherine.

Catherine had an expectation that the mentoring program would be a useful and valuable experience for her. She said, “I really wanted someone I could feel comfortable with, and that I could respect, and feel that they were knowledgeable enough to help me through my experience . . . through my internship.” When she went on to describe how well her experiences had matched her expectations, she seemed to feel fairly satisfied. In explaining whether she would create a similar mentoring experience for others if she were ever to become a mentor herself, she said, “I would say probably about the same. Perhaps in certain areas maybe I would have done a little bit more. A little bit more hands-on with scheduling and budgeting kinds of questions. But, I would say, for the most part, just about the same.”

As was noted in the previous section above, Catherine had felt a certain freedom to negotiate elements of the program with her mentor because of their prior professional relationship. She said that she found the formal requirements to be difficult, and that she found the more open-ended peer-group discussions to be valuable opportunities. It appeared to the researcher that Catherine’s mentor had been relatively flexible in facilitating collaboration between the protégés. Their meetings appeared to have included
some different activities, and more chances for dialogue. All of which indicated that this mentor had been making an effort to create experiences that were tailored to the needs of the protégés. “We did some of the explorations in our peer groups. But it was . . . the other things we did in the peer groups I felt were much more helpful. We had different speakers. We shared a lot of different experiences, and I received more out of that than going through the explorations.” Returning to this topic a little later Catherine indicated that the mentors in her peer group had changed the nature of the meetings early on, in an apparent effort to make them more productive. She also contrasted her mentor’s flexibility with that of a colleague’s experience.

I felt the explorations . . . It’s just that there was a lot of time that was spent on that initially, and I just didn’t feel it was helpful. When we had the peer-mentoring groups we would address some of those issues that were in the explorations, but we did it in a different way. It was more than just the paper and pencil aspect of it, and I know that this other Vice Principal I work with, he had it even worse than I did. I mean his mentor . . . both of us were in it for the very first time ever, and I didn’t have to do a whole lot of in-depth writing, for the explorations, but he did. I mean it was like a term paper for each one.

Near the end of this interview Catherine described her peer group meetings again. In listening to this description it was clear that the mentors were attempting to make them valuable. They individualized the discussions by allowing the protégés to focus either on specific issues and concerns or on themes of common interest.

It was more a sharing of experiences and ideas from each of us, and we would all come together and pool our. . . . For example, one month the topic was observations and evaluations and everybody was asked to bring their own tool, and we would share our observation and evaluation tools; and a lot of districts were revamping them, so you went back with 25 different observation forms, and evaluation forms that were helpful. Report cards—we did the same thing with that—sharing what our report card forms were. And I know that my district is looking into a new report card, so you were able to bring back that. So, you know, there was a lot that I was able to bring back that were sort of tried-and-true kinds of things, that wasn’t just something you found in a book or on the Internet. This was something that a school district in the area was using, and it was something
that they used successfully. So, you know, you bring that back and it’s . . . . I
found it very helpful in that respect.

This description clearly indicated that the mentors attached to this particular
cohort were facilitating collaboration and alliances.

Deborah.

When she was looking towards the beginning of her mentoring, Deborah was a bit
apprehensive because she expected that it would entail a great deal of shadowing, and
that she would have someone watching her all of the time while she tried to piece
together all the details of a brand new position. “. . . having someone shadowing me all
day and looking over my day-to-day routine was going to be a lot. Having to reflect and
discuss it all—and also having to do the same thing with my district administrators. It
seemed like it was going to be repetitive.” However, when she learned more about the
actual requirements, and that there was not a daily schedule, Deborah became more
relaxed and adopted a more positive attitude. After the program was underway Deborah
said that she appreciated having some input as to the schedule, and on setting some of the
activities. In regard to how she might approach a mentoring assignment if she were the
one who was responsible for establishing the parameters, Deborah said that if she felt that
her protégé was sufficiently capable she would create the same type of arrangement as
her mentor.

When the researcher asked more detailed questions about whether she felt that the
tasks had been well suited to her needs, Deborah responded that while the action research
project was relevant to her school’s needs, she thought that preparing the presentation
was somewhat overwhelming. In addition, the deadlines for completion at her school did
not correspond to when she needed to make the presentation to her peer group. She also
found that the explorations were very helpful to her, largely because the mentors attached
to her group allowed their discussions to be open-ended, and they invited the protégés to
discuss day-to-day issues and concerns. “My research project was a natural component of
what I was doing anyway, but it seemed very overwhelming to think that I was going to
have to do this huge additional project. But the eight explorations were a little more
useful, and they helped me to clarify my role as an administrator.”

Later, in speaking about the way that the program was constructed Deborah
appeared to contradict an earlier statement by saying that the fact that her mentor was not
in her building, shadowing her more often, was one of the greatest drawbacks to how the
program was designed.

Personally, I thought my mentor was fabulous, but professionally with not
being in the building, not experiencing the day-to-day routines, and not knowing
the population of parents or the student population, it didn't serve as broad a
purpose as I thought it should. And again, she was absolutely approachable, but
with all the repetitive issues, I didn't call her as often as I might have to run every
little thing past her. She was great but I didn't find myself going to her to solve
every little problem.

But she clarified this conflict later in saying, “I liked having somebody who gave
me input on what I was doing without trying to tell me how to do every single step, but
who just gave me a little guidance in the right direction.” These statements led the
researcher to conclude that the mentor in this relationship was sensitive to the needs of
her protégé, and tailored the nature of their work to suit the protégé’s unique style of
thinking and working.

Elizabeth.

Elizabeth had a good deal of experience with mentoring before starting the
program. She had been mentored herself as a teacher, and then she had served as an
informal mentor to other teachers. When she began her mentoring she was hoping for someone who would provide support and guidance, but who would not make too many claims on her time.

I remember hoping that the person was going to provide me with support that maybe somebody in the district couldn't provide me with, you know, given their background. I was hoping that the person would be nurturing and help me to identify the weaknesses that I had as a novice administrator, and I don't know if this is applicable, but I was hoping to have somebody who wouldn't be so demanding on my time, because you know being a new administrator is overwhelming as it is.

When she reflected back on her mentoring program afterwards she was able to say that her expectations were matched by her experiences with her mentor, and that their sessions together were tailored to suit her needs, especially the peer group discussion. "It [the group discussions] was the most valuable time spent, where someone would bring up something, and then we would discuss it." As noted above, Elizabeth also spoke about the fact that her mentor was available for informal one-on-one discussions that she found to be particularly helpful. "You know she would listen to me and we would go back and forth a little bit. So, probably just the coaching [was especially helpful]."

The least useful aspect of the mentoring for Elizabeth was the action research project. Although it was related to her work, she resented the requirement because she thought it was too much like a school assignment. Later in our discussion Elizabeth repeated her opinion that she appreciated the fact that her mentor was able to help her to understand and complete the State requirements in an efficient manner. "You know, the expectations were clear . . . as far as the research, and in the explorations." It was evident to the researcher that Elizabeth felt that her mentor did as much as possible, given the constraints of the State requirements, in order to make the mentoring experience useful to
her. However, she also was accepting of the fact that there seemed to be very little latitude as to what this mentor could do to tailor the program to suit her individual professional needs. She was willing to complete the requirements as presented, but she would have preferred that they were different, or more open-ended.

Francis.

Francis described his transition from teaching to administration as being somewhat of a whirlwind experience. The change in careers had occurred in October, after the regular school year had begun, and the timing was apparently somewhat unexpected. Never having had a formal mentor in the private school where he had been a teacher, Francis said that he had very few expectations, other than having someone to explain things to him.

So my head was spinning just with the regular duties of a new school district I was learning, and a brand new position. And so it was almost like someone said, "Here, you have to have a mentor." I don't think I had any expectations. I think, once they started explaining it to me, I thought okay, once they start working with me they'll explain some ideas about how to deal with parents and kids and teachers.

But as previously noted above, when Francis started working with his mentor he discovered that she had never been a building administrator. He made it clear that while he liked and respected his mentor, he regarded the relationship as one that existed primarily to satisfy a requirement, and that it had little other value to him. In his first administrative position Francis and his mentor had worked in locations that were only a few minutes apart, so it was easier for them to get together more often. When he switched to his current position, he found that they were now separated by a 45-minute drive. Their meetings became less frequent, but that suited Francis because he tended to turn to the colleagues in his district for issues of immediate concern. He described the workload for
completing the explorations as being very extensive, and that he often had to use holidays
to complete extensive writing assignments.

But in my group, we did go through each of the eight explorations on our own
and wrote them out, and then talked about them and it took a lot of time. But I
didn't have a lot of time during the day, because of dealing with other issues. So I
spent a lot of my time off working on it. When I had a couple of weeks off, I
found myself coming in to work on days that I had off just to work on that, which
again, is something that is required, so of course I did it.

Francis indicated that, while the approach to completing required activities
mandated by his mentor was very demanding, he did find that there were times when she
was willing to be more flexible, especially in terms of working around his schedule.

So, just the fact that she would come to see me, that she was flexible in terms
of understanding my schedule and how much stuff I had going on. One of the
things I remember was that it was October, and the school year had already
started and I was just trying to play catch up, and she would understand that, and
from the beginning she was just a real nice person to work with. That was the
most important. The very first time I met her it was just an introductory interview
and forget about trying to match personalities . . . they just set you up with
someone. And I was wondering if I could work with this person. But it turned out
she was a nice person, she was easy to talk to, and she was understanding of my
schedule. And that's why I stayed with her, because they gave both of us the
option of cutting ties and me starting over with someone new down here. But in
the end we both chose to stay together, because I felt so comfortable working with
her. And I felt like I had already gone through 1 year of being a vice principal and
I knew I could always go to see my principal here if I ever needed anything
specific. So I knew I could do it again down here. She even came down and met
with my principal here, so it seemed to be right for me to stay with her again this
year.

Francis seemed to have found the peer group meetings to be especially helpful,
and he described them as opportunities to share issues of concern in an open dialogue. In
addition, he seemed to have felt that while his mentor may not have been quite so flexible
in shaping the tasks to suit his needs, he did seem to feel that his mentor was relatively
flexible about facilitating collaboration and alliances.
Gregory.

Gregory was similar to others in that he had few pre-conceived expectations about what to expect from the mentoring program. He was hoping for someone who would help him to get through the State requirements without looking over his shoulder too much.

My expectation was, number one, that it would be somebody who would guide me through this program that the State had set up. There were certain paperwork expectations, certain things that we had to document for the State, and certain things that we had to accomplish. I was strongly hoping that he would help me to understand them and make sure I was meeting those requirements first of all.

Later in the interview, as noted above, Gregory spoke about how difficult he found it to complete the written requirements. “On the one hand, I was looking for certain of the paperwork requirements to be extremely tedious and onerous, the weekly log of what I had to do, like connecting the standards to my job, I found to be extremely painful.” But in other respects, such as the action research project, he found that his mentor was a little more flexible.

. . . This has nothing to do with my mentor who I think was fabulous—but I think he was working within certain expectations that were placed upon him by the state, and when they organized this these standards were too much. Now, the project wasn't too bad, because I was able to pick something that I was essentially doing anyway. It took a little bit of extra documentation. It took a little bit of extra work to put it all together for my group. But, for the most part, he was perfectly okay with whatever I was already doing within the context of my work, so that part worked out very well.

However, in describing the type of relationship that he had with his mentor Gregory seemed to feel that his mentor did what he could to tailor the program to suit his individual needs.

And again, he was always focusing in on what my work currently was. So he was helping me out with the work expectations that were given to me by my principal and my superintendent at the time. So everything we dealt with in that regard was very pertinent and I think very helpful.
A little later in the interview Gregory repeated his opinion that he found the State requirements to be excessive, and that his mentor required him to complete work that he did not find productive or important. But, he also stressed how much he appreciated the peer group meetings, and how much he enjoyed those sessions. "I think the group meetings, our cohort group, were very positive. Being able to get together with other people, to get out of the office for a little bit, to have time to reflect with them and with the mentor, I'd say that was the most helpful." Therefore it seemed apparent that the mentor was not completely successful in tailoring activities to suit Gregory's individual needs. But he was successful in facilitating collaboration and alliances.

_Helen._

When she started the administrative mentoring program Helen had never been mentored herself as a beginning teacher. However, as a teacher with over 25 years of experience she had been a mentor to other beginning teachers. Her initial expectation was that there would be many opportunities for face-to-face discussions about many of the issues she was facing each day and how to handle them. She was unprepared for the fact that much of the mentoring she received was done over a distance, and that the discussions were often focused on the more formal exploration topics. In describing what she might do differently if she ever became an administrative mentor, she said,

... hopefully I could do more of just sitting down and talking about situations. What would you do if? Or, I had this situation once ... And the political stuff is a whole other side of it, dealing with all of that stuff, and the face-to-face conversations. You know, skip the paperwork, and putting together the portfolios, and standards, and writing up all the—you know, a brand-new principal has way more than their share of the paperwork to do. I don't think they need any more of that. It's the other things that they need; the actual physical contact and conversation.
Throughout the interview Helen stressed that she was not satisfied with her mentoring experience. She pointed out her mentor’s inexperience, and the fact that her mentor was often unavailable for the types of discussions she felt that she needed to be having with a mentor. Helen also pointed out that she considered the peer group meetings to have been the most useful component of her mentoring experience, and that other mentors attached to her group often provided the type of dialogue she was seeking. “Even within our peer group there were several other mentors there, who within the discussions provided a lot of real-life examples of things they’ve been through, how they’ve handled it.” In addition, she also related the anecdote cited above about having formed a bond with her vice principal’s mentor when they met to discuss her subordinate’s problematic job performance. And that, again, was a face-to-face meeting about a specific issue of concern. For Helen the mentoring experience was very frustrating and relatively unproductive.

It seemed to the researcher that Helen never felt that the activities were tailored to any of her individual needs. All of the positive comments she made were about the incidental discussions that happened in and around the regular agenda items. She did indicate that she appreciated many of the associations that arose in the peer group meetings, or as a result of speaking to other mentors outside of the formal group meetings. It appeared that Helen did form collaborations, but these did not seem to have been intentionally facilitated by her mentor.

*Ingrid.*

In her former teaching position Ingrid had not been required to undergo mentoring. But she had acted as a mentor herself later in her career. When she switched
into administration she expected the mentoring requirement to be the same as it had recently been designed, before the switch to a 2-year program. She was surprised and not altogether pleased about how the program had changed.

I expected that my mentor . . . originally I thought that the program would be the old program, and that I would have an in-district mentor. So I was surprised to find out that my mentor would be from out-of-district. I assumed a mentor would be someone who would help me with some of the typical day-in and day-out responsibilities of a principal in terms of knowing what paperwork would be due, or what kind of situations would arise, and that it would be somebody I could call if I was running into a problem.

Ingrid frequently expressed her opinion that her mentor was only able to provide limited practical advice to her about specific issues. She thought that the research project and the explorations had only a limited practical value, and that, while her mentor tried to offer useful ideas, that these efforts were limited by not knowing enough about how her district operated. In regard to what she might do if she were mentoring someone else Ingrid said, “I would make the same kind of great effort that my mentor did. But, I would hope that by the time I became a mentor there would be a way to more clearly define the role.” In this case it seemed that the mentor did make an effort to share his experiences. Ingrid said that the most useful aspect of the mentoring experience was, “Getting to work with a mentor who had lots of experience, who could share his experiences with me, and networking with other new and experienced administrators.” However, her attitude toward the required activities was not very positive. “I felt that the eight explorations areas, in some ways, were a lot of added work, almost a repeat of graduate school. In some ways they got in the way of what I needed to do day-to-day, they almost doubled the work.”
In describing the nature of their peer group meetings, Ingrid also had mixed feelings about their effectiveness. While the roundtable discussions were among the best part of their meetings, they didn’t occur often enough.

We tried. But for all the mentors it was . . . . They didn’t really feel that it had been clearly defined—what those meetings should be about. So sometimes a mentor tried to facilitate something, but not all the other mentors necessarily agreed. For those of us that were being mentored the actual roundtable discussions, when we did them, were probably the most beneficial to me, and hearing that other people might be having similar experiences, or something that I hadn’t heard before, that might come up. But the structure of those peer meetings was not overly clear.

Later in the interview Ingrid returned to this topic again.

I think there needs to be some definition as to . . . I think that perhaps there should be some type of expectation of what those groups should be for—the purpose of those groups. Although I think that the mentors were given some expectations, I think that the practicality of all that tended to go by the wayside once the group of people would start to meet, everyone had had so much to deal with during their day that everyone just wanted to talk.

It was evident that Ingrid did not feel that the activities she was asked to complete during her mentoring program had been tailored to suit her individual needs. In addition, it was also clear from the descriptions of how her peer group functioned, that any collaboration was more accidental than intentional.

**Discussion of Contextual Factor E: Opportunities for Relationship-Building Activities**

Opportunities to engage in relationship-building activities, especially in developing dialogue.

The questions related to this contextual factor were as follows:

(2) Did your experience with your mentor meet your expectations? Why or why not?
(3) If you ever decide to become a mentor yourself, would you do more than your mentor, less than your mentor, or the same as your mentor?

(5) How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

(8) What was the most helpful factor in establishing a working relationship with your mentor?

(9) What was the greatest hindrance to forming a productive relationship with your mentor?

(11) Would any type of relationship-building activity have helped you and your mentor to establish a more productive relationship? Specify.

(12) If your mentor was of the opposite gender, how did this factor affect your relationship?

(19) Do you think that your mentor derived any professional benefit through his or her participation in this program? Explain.

(20) Do you feel that you personally did anything to assist your mentor in his or her professional development?

**Summary of Issues Related to Contextual Factor E**

In regard to the factors that were most helpful in helping the participants to form a working relationship, Andrew and Catherine both knew their mentors beforehand, and felt that there was a certain level of familiarity with them before starting in this new program. All of the other participants cited their mentors’ personalities as being helpful. For instance, some said that their mentors were outgoing and flexible, or else that they were good listeners and provided a sympathetic ear when needed. Elizabeth had
specifically requested a mentor who had experience in personnel, and she felt that working with another administrator who understood her job requirements made a highly significant difference in helping them to form a working relationship. Francis, Gregory, and Ingrid mentioned some form of initial meeting when each of them had a chance to get acquainted. In most cases these meetings occurred in restaurants and coffee shops, and the protégés all expressed a level of satisfaction with this type of informal get together.

In speaking about the factors that most hindered the formation of a working relationship, Bernadette, Catherine, and Elizabeth all said that there were none. Deborah also said that she did not feel there were any hindrances. However, she also reported that when her mentor offered assistance, or questioned how she was balancing things, she would make it a point of pride not to allow her mentor to know how hard she had to work to stay ahead of deadlines. Andrew, Helen, and Ingrid reported that the greatest problem was that both protégé and mentor were extremely busy, and that there was a general lack of available time for any informal meetings, which were not strictly related to business—as opposed to those meetings that were intended to accomplish task-related objectives, such as the peer group meetings. Francis and Gregory both cited what they perceived to be weaknesses in their mentors’ abilities as hindrances to forming a better working relationship. Francis said that his mentor had no building level or middle school background, which meant that there was a limit to what he felt that his mentor could do to help him with difficulties. Gregory reported that his mentor was uncertain of some procedural details. It seemed as if this caused a general lessening of confidence in his
ability as a mentor that may have made the participant less interested in establishing a stronger relationship.

When asked if any type of relationship-building activity would have helped to build a more productive working relationship, Andrew, Bernadette, Deborah, and Francis all said that they saw no need for anything of this nature. All four indicated that either their relationship was fine without any type of exercise, or that they had no desire for a closer relationship with their mentor. Catherine said that her prior relationship with her mentor made this type of activity unnecessary. But when the interviewer asked if she would employ such an activity if she ever became a mentor herself, the participant said she would, and that she would search for some type of trust-building activity in order to strengthen a new relationship. Helen said that she wished that there were more opportunities for relationship-building activities. She suggested that the protégé should be given release times to visit his or her mentor’s school in order to become better acquainted. Elizabeth, Gregory, and Ingrid all reported that they did engage in relationship-building activities. Elizabeth and Gregory were invited to restaurants or coffee shops on several occasions where they spent time talking about personal matters such as their families. Ingrid said that she was invited to a large general meeting between a group of mentors and the protégés who would all be forming a new peer group. At the start of the meeting the whole group engaged in an “ice-breaker” type activity, but she did not remember much about it. About a week later Ingrid said that her mentor invited her to a restaurant in order to “get acquainted.” She reported that these two meetings were helpful in making her feel comfortable about working with her new mentor.
When asked whether working with a mentor of the opposite gender was ever an issue, all of the participants replied that it had no effect on their relationship. Those participants whose mentors were the same gender did not think that it would have mattered to them if they had a mentor of the opposite gender. Those participants who did have a mentor of the opposite gender did not express any concerns that this factor ever created an issue or a concern. Andrew, who was a male working with a female mentor, pointed out that he also had other female colleagues at his school. Elizabeth, who was a female working with a female mentor, said that having a mentor of the same gender made things easier for them, but that it would not have mattered to her if she were assigned to a male mentor. Francis, who was a male working with a female mentor, said that he hoped to stay in touch with his mentor in the future. But then he added that he did not want the researcher to think that this meant they might start dating. He stressed that he meant that their relationship would always remain strictly professional.

The researcher asked participants whether they personally did anything to assist in their mentors’ professional development in order to elicit whether they felt that they had made a valuable contribution to the relationship, or whether they perceived the relationship as one that was mutually beneficial. In most cases the participants said that they felt that their mentors were interested in the data they gathered during the action research projects. Andrew, Catherine, Helen, and Ingrid all said that their mentors had specifically requested research data in order to bring information back to their own districts. Bernadette and Francis added that the collegial discussions that occurred during the peer group meetings provided their mentors with stimulating new ideas. Deborah
reported that her mentor had trouble with using a computer and that she had shown her how to use a flash drive.

In most of these interviews it appeared as if the participants felt that the contextual factor was present in their relationships, and that they were satisfied that there were sufficient opportunities for them to develop whatever level of relationship they wanted to establish with their mentors. While some participants may have experienced other problems with the mentoring program, most of them indicated that they felt their relationship allowed them opportunities for dialogue. Of the participants who reported less satisfactory relationships, the issues of difficulty usually revolved around the State's requirements. However, those participants who experienced difficulties with their mentor relationships also expressed that there was some corresponding lack of communication.

Discussions With the Participants Related to Contextual Factor E

Andrew.

When asked about his overall experiences Andrew initially indicated that he had reservations about how useful the program had been for him. He explained that his mentor was a superintendent as opposed to a principal, and that their meetings sometimes went on for extended periods, with side conversations that included "war stories" or baseball scores. Andrew did not seem to perceive these peripheral conversations as a form of relationship-building activity, but rather as annoying digressions that he tolerated out of politeness. When the interviewer asked about the factor that was most helpful in establishing their working relationship, Andrew explained that they had previously known each other slightly as a result of his having interviewed with his mentor for an administrative position in the mentor's district. Despite the fact that his mentor did not
hire him, Andrew did not appear to be angry or resentful. In fact, he continued to refer to his mentor as a friend, and even as contact if he ever decided to switch to a Central Office position in the future. One very significant fact that he pointed out was that his mentor came to his school to observe him in various work-related tasks. He felt that these direct observations provided them with substantive and specific topics for subsequent discussions.

I think it was very helpful when he came to my school and observed me lead an assembly program and he also came and observed me lead a Halloween program. And I think that, you know, he kind of saw where I was coming from, and, you know, what was positive about my work, and what he could add. Again, it was more face-to-face.

Andrew said that he felt the greatest hindrance to forming a productive relationship was a lack of time. But this seemed to have been primarily on his part, as opposed to being the fault of the mentor, who seemed to be willing to make time for both professional and casual conversations.

In regard to the need for any type of relationship-building activity Andrew was adamant about that having been unnecessary. When asked if the gender of his mentor had any bearing on their relationship Andrew indicated that it did not. He even went on to add that he had female colleagues that he considered to be unofficial mentors.

It wouldn't make any difference at all for me, and, in fact, my true mentor last year was my principal, who was female [names previous supervisor], and my realistic mentors now are both male and female.

Lastly, when asked if he felt that their relationship had been one in which their dialogues had provided a benefit to his mentor, Andrew thought that he had not helped his mentor's professional development. Then he qualified that statement by saying that he thought his mentor might use some of the data from his action research project for a
course he was teaching. But he did not appear to think that their relationship had ever evolved to the point where there was a significant mutual benefit.

Bernadette.

Bernadette had a very positive relationship with her mentor, and said that it had been of great value to her professionally. She described her mentor as being generous with his time, caring and helpful. She previously described how he had initially removed one of her primary concerns, which left her feeling relieved and grateful towards him. As a result she considered that the experience had benefitted her a good deal, but she added that some of the members of her peer group had less beneficial experiences because their mentors had had lower expectations, and had required them to do less work. When the interviewer asked about how they had initially begun to build their relationship Bernadette described their first couple of discussions as being fruitful ones because her mentor had been very outgoing, and had made himself available to her whenever she needed his input.

Then what happened was, within a day, he called me to tell me that he was my mentor, and he explained where he had been for the last several years as an administrator, and that the door was always open to call him and to work with him at any time. And I think because he made himself so available, right from the get-go, I felt very comfortable with him, and knew, right off the bat, that I’d have a great working relationship with him. And then, of course, the first time I actually met with him, he sat down right away: “How are things going?” “What do you need help with?” “Is there a problem going on at your school that you need another idea how to solve?” And I think that because he was so open, and really tried to get information from me, it made me feel comfortable, and I just knew right away I could trust him with anything I had to talk to him about.

When the interviewer asked if there had been any factor that hindered their relationship she said that there had not been anything that came to mind. She reiterated that they both felt very positive about the relationship they had built. She also stressed
that the fact that they were of opposite genders had never been an issue of concern, and
that she felt completely comfortable in working with her mentor in a professional
relationship. Finally, when we discussed whether the relationship had been mutually
beneficial, Bernadette felt strongly that her mentor had derived a good deal from their
group discussions.

... because when we meet as a peer group we have probably about six mentors
there, and each one of them has from one to three mentees. OK? So it's a large
group. And a lot of times we'll have a session where we discuss any new things
that are going on in our districts or any new issues in education, period, that might
be going on. And we'll just have dialogue, you know? I think everybody there has
benefited from that because you're hearing how one person is looking at it,
compared to another person ... . They'll say, "Oh, so this is how you handled it?
Because this is how I would have handled it" type of things, because similar
situations have occurred between different buildings and different school districts.
I think it's funny, because, like I said, he took the leadership role, in a sense, over
everybody. And so I think he's benefited from that because I think, for him, he
felt like he had to do something, so it almost made him go out and make sure he
had something to present, whether it was an article, or whatever it was, something
that was a hot topic in education. So that professional development alone, on his
part, to share with us, I think you learn. The other thing I feel was beneficial, even
though the action research project was a lot ... but the mentors ask a lot of
questions. And a lot of it is because they're curious and they want to know "Well,
how is this working?" And they might want to implement it in their own district...
So, again, I think they've gotten something from it.

From this description it appeared that the mentors and protégés were engaged in
stimulating group discussions that they all found to be useful and professionally
beneficial. It also appeared that their relationship had grown to the point that they were
interacting like colleagues, and the mentors seemed to be open to learning from their
protégés.

*Catherine.*

Catherine felt that her relationship with her mentor had been a very helpful and
useful one for her. She described her relationship as a comfortable one, which had begun
to develop several years before when her mentor was an administrator in the district where she was teaching.

My mentor was a previous administrator of mine, so that I think helped, because I had the respect for him, working as a teacher for him. And I knew him. So that comfort level was there before I even started. And I respected him as somebody who had experience.

When she described the factor that had been most helpful in establishing their relationship, she repeated that it was their prior familiarity with one another. In fact, she also indicated that her mentor had been instrumental in their having been paired together as a result of their prior relationship.

And he went through the mentoring program to become a mentor and knew that I was going to be going through the program. And so we were able to be paired-up. And for me it was a good experience because we didn’t have to establish that mutual respect for each other, and comfort level, and trust, it was there before we started.

In speaking about whether there was any hindrance to the forming of a working relationship Catherine said there was not. She reiterated that they shared a strong relationship when they started, and had maintained that relationship throughout the course of their work together. When the interviewer asked if she thought that a mentor and protégé who did not already have a prior relationship would need to work on building a relationship Catherine said that it would be essential for them to work on building a level of trust in one another. “Yes, I do think you need to have that kind of trust established in order to have a good relationship, and for it to be productive.”

As a result of their prior relationship Catherine also said that the fact that her mentor was of the opposite gender did not have any bearing on their relationship.
Lastly, when the interviewer asked about whether the relationship had been mutually beneficial, Catherine felt that her mentor had taken a good deal from their meetings.

I think it’s kept him current on a lot of what’s going on. Because there are new things that have been introduced since he’s retired, and . . . this mentoring program being one of them. So being involved in it, he’s certainly very knowledgeable about it. I think it has actually invigorated him a little bit.

She also cited his interest in her action research data as a specific example of how their dialogue had helped her mentor professionally.

*Deborah.*

Deborah described her relationship with her mentor in mixed terms. It was apparent that she liked her mentor as a person, describing her at one point as “fabulous.” But she also was critical of the fact that her mentor did not have any familiarity with her district or its needs, and that her mentor did not help her with any of the issues she was facing on a daily basis. Their relationship appeared to have been confined to completing the State requirements for the mentoring program. When the interviewer asked about the factor that was the greatest help to forming a solid working relationship, Deborah said that it was the fact that they had similar personalities.

I think that personality was the key to establishing a productive relationship. I found that, psychologically, her personality was very similar to mine, and that helped to make it a very productive relationship.

She indicated that her mentor then became a sort of cheerleader who helped her by providing emotional support.

*Just to know that someone was always rooting for me. I think just to know that the mentor was always there, not to be a judge but to be a guide. That was one of the best aspects of the program.*
Deborah did not say that there was any specific hindrance to the forming of this relationship, but it was also clear from her description of discussions at peer group meetings that she had narrowly limited her view of her mentor’s role, and when her mentor had apparently made an overture that may have led to the formation of a richer relationship, Deborah did not seem to be very receptive.

I think the other thing I should clarify is that I was always one step ahead. For instance, each time that we were meeting I always had everything done, and then my questions for the next step. So I never discussed that with her. But she knew that the action research project was burdensome, because she would say to me things like “How are you juggling all of this?” So she was recognizing it, but I was not complaining. Informally, I would say something like “This is really a tough time to get things done,” or “There’s a lot of other things going on,” but I never asked for an extension.

Perhaps for the same reason, that she was satisfied that her mentor’s role was limited to simply helping her complete requirements, Deborah said that she did not see the need for any type of relationship-building activity. The fact that Deborah and her mentor were of the same gender did not appear to matter. Since she felt a bond with her as a person, based on their having similar personalities, it is possible that she may have felt differently about having been assigned to work with a male mentor. But, on the other hand, since she also saw her mentor as simply a person who signed off on the completion of requirements, her mentor’s gender would most likely never be an issue.

Finally, when the interviewer asked Deborah if the relationship had been mutually beneficial, she replied that she had supplied some technological assistance to her mentor.

She is very open to technology, and that is an area that I’m pretty good in. I got her using a flash drive, and I think that getting in the habit of using technology as a tool is something that she liked to develop. So perhaps that is something I contributed.
Deborah also indicated that she thought her mentor had benefitted from many of their group discussions. But she never really indicated that their relationship had become a stronger one as a result of their dialoguing together one-on-one.

But at our monthly meetings there were lots of conversations that touched on things any professional would find interesting and useful. So if she continued to be a mentor I would think that would benefit her. We shared a lot at our meetings, and maybe that would help someone to problem solve.

Near the end of the interview Deborah returned to the nature of the peer group meetings, and made another remark that indicated that the relationships between the mentors and protégés were not as close as they seemed to have been in other groups.

"I mean, everyone knew who the mentors were. You could tell the difference between who was retired and who was a brand-new administrator."

Elizabeth.

Previously Elizabeth described how she had requested a change in mentors when she switched to a new professional position halfway through the mentoring program. When she was assigned a new mentor she indicated that she felt it was incumbent upon her to make the relationship work successfully. She said that the relationship had been a good one, and that she had found it to be useful to her. She also said that she liked her mentor as a person, which made it easy for her to form a closer bond with her while they were working together. When reflecting upon the factors that had made their relationship successful Elizabeth, like Deborah, pointed to her mentor's personality, rather than to something more tangible.

I think the fact that she really wanted to be a mentor and that she has a very nurturing personality. I think that really paved the way for a very open dialogue and . . . us really being able to relate to one another. It was just tremendous.
As noted, Elizabeth had identified the lack of experience in personnel matters as a hindrance in her relationship with her previous mentor. But, when she was assigned a new mentor, she did not indicate that they experienced any other hindrance. Instead, she was very satisfied that the new relationship met her needs.

In regard to whether any type of relationship-building activity was helpful to them, Elizabeth indicated that they had spent a good deal of time together outside of the school setting, and outside of their more formal peer group meetings. These informal meetings appeared to have afforded them the opportunity to bond together.

I think that just having one-on-one time is the best ... yes, it was the best way. I think being able to meet outside the building, of school, you know, being able to go for coffee ... I think her availability helped us establish a productive relationship.

When the interviewer asked about whether gender was an issue, Elizabeth said that she felt that the fact that her mentor was also a woman had made it easier for her to establish a relationship more quickly, but that she could have worked with a man who had the professional qualifications she required in a mentor.

It doesn't matter to me. However, I think the fact that she was a female just lent itself to us being that much closer. However, I think I would have been just as happy if I had had a competent male version of her.

The nature of this relationship came up again when the interviewer asked Elizabeth if she felt that she had done anything to benefit her mentor. She replied that she thought their relationship itself was mutually beneficial.

What professional benefit? Well, I would say that there would be a personal benefit, because it would be satisfying to her to send somebody off with more professional growth than I had before she met me. Professional benefit? I guess that I was one of her first mentees. So I think it probably reinforced some of the right elements of a mentor-mentee relationship.
This particular relationship appeared to have been a stronger one than some of the others seen previously, and that was made more beneficial by the fact that Elizabeth and her mentor had multiple opportunities for one-on-one dialogue, in informal settings.

Francis.

After his first year in the mentoring program Francis switched jobs and moved from one county to another county in Northern New Jersey. He reported that he was given the option of switching mentors, but that he and his mentor had already established a relationship and they mutually chose to complete the second year together. In addition, Francis referred several times to the fact that he had built strong ties with the members of his peer group, and that he appreciated the chance to network with them. When he spoke about their first meeting, Francis described an introductory discussion where his mentor listened to his concerns about balancing all of the demands of the state requirements with those of his brand new job. He seemed to feel that she was understanding and sympathetic, and was willing to give him some flexibility.

One of the things I remember was that it was October, and the school year had already started and I was just trying to play catch up, and she would understand that, and from the beginning she was just a real nice person to work with. That was the most important. The very first time I met her it was just an introductory interview, and forget about trying to match personalities . . . they just set you up with someone. And I was wondering if I could work with this person. But it turned out she was a nice person, she was easy to talk to, and she was understanding of my schedule.

In addition, Francis seemed to be satisfied that his mentor did not feel a need to pay many visits to his school. He commented on his appreciation of her having traveled to his school to meet with his principal right after he started in his new position. However, for the most part he appeared to feel that he could rely on his colleagues for
job-specific advice and support since this mentor did not have any middle school or building level administrative experience.

Even being in a high school you find the kids are different. They are middle school kids. In this school there are over a thousand kids, and I'm just constantly on the go and there's a lot going on. And her not having been through that made it a lot more difficult for her to understand what my days were like.

When the interviewer asked about specific relationship-building activities, Francis said that they would not have been helpful, and that they did not have any trouble communicating. It seemed that he did not consider that his initial interview with his mentor counted as a relationship-building activity. Francis also dismissed the gender issue as unimportant. However, in speaking about whether he and his mentor would maintain a professional connection after the official 2-year period ended, he was the only participant in this study who felt the need to stress that he did not want the interviewer to think that this would constitute dating.

We do still touch base and she'll ask how I'm doing, and we talk about our families and such—we'll have a quick conversation, and I'll ask how she is. Even from a personal level—not that we're going to go out or anything—but just the fact that I know there is another person I can call if I ever have any questions.

In reflecting upon whether he had done anything to benefit his mentor professionally, Francis said that anything she derived would have been indirect, from having listened and observed him throughout the process, as opposed to anything he may have done directly. But, although he protested that he did not do anything specific, he also said that they shared many conversations, both individually and in the peer group meetings, which may have benefitted his mentor.

Maybe just the stories I would tell her I guess. You know, they say you learn it best when you teach, and maybe just going through this whole process with me helped her to learn a little bit more about her own district. So maybe indirectly, not so much directly from me, but maybe listening to me, seeing the work I've
done, all that—or the projects she saw me put together—might have helped her a little. She might've picked up something from all that. Again, you can't just sit there and not take anything from it. She definitely took something from it.

*Gregory.*

Gregory expressed a good deal of satisfaction with the nature of his relationship with his mentor. He had very little prior experience with mentoring relationships, so he had few expectations. He wanted to complete the State requirements quickly and efficiently and he felt that his mentor would guide him through this process. He said that he felt his mentor had satisfied his expectations by explaining the requirements, seeing him through their completion, by giving him professional articles, and by facilitating peer group meetings that were informative. When he was asked about any specific relationship-building activity Francis said that they had held an initial meeting in order to get acquainted, which he felt had been useful.

I think it was just that he came in, we sat down, and just talked for a while. I think it was just him reaching out to me initially, and working through that part of the process, that was good.

In speaking about the elements that may have hindered their relationship Francis chose to focus on his mentor’s lack of training. However, while Francis’ unhappiness had more to do with the lack of information about program requirements, as opposed to anything that his mentor could control, he did indicate that there were times when he felt that his mentor did not always communicate with him effectively.

It’s going to go back to the expectations that were placed on us. And part of it is because the process was new, and we were the first group to truly go through this. I think he was about as knowledgeable as you could be, but maybe wasn’t always able to express exactly what we were to do because it was the first time for him too. What it ultimately came down to, I think, was that whatever we did, as long as he was good with it, he kind of certified that with the state and that’s more or less where it ended. But there was some confusion for me. I didn't know if my project was going to be seen only by my group and my mentor. I didn't know if
my project was going to go on to a committee of people who had never worked with me before in the state, who didn't know me. So many things were kind of up in the air for me, and I wasn't completely clear about how to do certain things.

When he responded to the question about relationship-building activities, Francis said that they had not engaged in anything formal, but that more than once they had held informal meetings in restaurants, which he had enjoyed because they provided an opportunity to get to know one another.

Food. We really didn't go through any sort of team-building activities, icebreaker activities, nothing like that ... we met in restaurants, we had breakfast. We broke bread together and we just had a good time.

In regard to the question about gender, Francis had a male mentor. But he said that it would not have mattered to him if his mentor had been a woman.

When he was asked if he felt that he had done anything to contribute to this relationship by benefitting his mentor, Francis said that he did not believe so, except that his mentor might have benefitted in a general manner from some of their discussions.

I would have to say no with this, because at this stage of his career, professionally, he's done it all. I guess he's still learning, he's still growing, he's still actively involved. So while on the one hand, it probably does benefit him on a personal level. And he even told us that he always walks away with new ideas and different perspectives from our group. So in that way, the answer might be a yes, but I think it's definitely weighed more in our favor, as far as how much professional growth occurred.

Helen.

In regard to her relationship with her mentor Helen said that she found her mentor to be helpful to her. However, she also stressed several times that her mentor was not available to discuss building-specific issues, such as personnel, logistical matters, or budgetary concerns. She explained that the relationships that were most likely to continue were with other members of her peer group. In speaking about her experiences overall,
she even indicated that other mentors in the peer group provided more useful feedback to her.

Getting a chance to meet other experienced administrators. Even within our peer group there were several other mentors there, who within the discussions provided a lot of real-life examples of things they've been through, how they've handled it. There were lots of discussions about current state law. What was coming up, what we needed to be aware of. The kinds of situations that might really get you into hot water, the kinds of things that might keep you up at night. Those discussions were great.

In speaking about what she considered to have been a hindrance to her in forming a productive relationship, Helen indicated that the greatest problem had been what she regarded as a great deal of unnecessary paperwork requirements by her mentor. She seemed to feel that many of these requirements were simply an exercise that she needed to complete in order to facilitate an evaluation by someone who barely knew her, except through the observations of other administrators.

Just going through the standards and talking through those talking points. I felt really more like I was just giving him the information he needed to write his evaluations for me. You know, I provided him with all the documentation, and all of the observations that were written here by my direct supervisors here and all of that background material that he then used in order to be able to write his observations of me. So I kind of felt like I wasn't getting anything out of that.

Helen also indicated that lack of time was a great concern to her. Since the paperwork requirements were perceived to be excessive, it was not surprising to the interviewer that Helen expressed a good deal of frustration about the topic, and that she returned to this subject more than once.

Absolutely, it was time. Personally, on my part, I had so many issues, especially when my VP left me in midyear. So I was at that point alone, and I had a ton of observations that she hadn't finished that I now had to do—with testing coming up—you know the whole game. So I was like, “Are you kidding me? I have to get all this ready for my mentor?” I had so many other things on my plate, at that moment, there was just no way. I mean, that was at the bottom of the list.
Probably because Helen did not appear to feel very close to her mentor, she was very quick to say that there was no relationship-building activity that would have made her feel more positive about their relationship. She did mention that she had known of her mentor beforehand, since he had worked in another school within the same district for a very brief time, several years before. In addition, she also added that her mentor’s wife was still employed as a secretary in another location in her district. She seemed to feel that these instances gave her an adequate level of familiarity with her mentor. In addition, she also dismissed gender as an issue, indicating that they were never close enough for it to have made any difference. She did, however, recommend that the State should provide time for the mentors and protégés to develop a better relationship.

It's tough, because you're not given the time you need to really develop a relationship with your mentor. If I hadn't known mine previously, I would only know him from the couple of times we've been able to get together. You don't get a chance to really know somebody that way. I don't know if there's some way to build in—maybe if the state really wants to get serious about mentoring and if they want it to be somebody from outside of your district, then instead of all this paperwork stuff, build in about 2 or 3 days during the year when the district agrees that this administrator will be given a professional development day to spend with their mentor. Then you've got a whole day set aside with that person. Forget all this paperwork.

In regard to whether there was anything reciprocal about this relationship, Helen indicated that her mentor had been very interested in the data from her action research project, and that he had asked her a number of questions about the particulars of her research.

I was doing a lot of analysis of test data. You know, comparing it by classroom, actually using it to make the teachers maybe a little bit more accountable for the students moving through their rooms. So he was pretty interested in that, and we spent some time discussing what I was doing—how I was using it, how I was presenting it to the teachers, how I figured out where the weak areas were, that kind of thing.
Ingrid.

Although Ingrid generally felt dissatisfied with many aspects of her mentoring relationship—due to the requirements, and due to the fact that her mentor came from outside her district—she did feel that she had developed a relationship with her mentor that had some professional value for her. In trying to explain what factor had helped establish their relationship she pointed to her mentor’s objectivity, and said that there had been times when it was helpful to seek the opinion of someone from the outside.

The fact that the mentor was someone from out of the district, on 1 or 2 occasions, if something came up within the district, and I wasn’t quite sure how to approach it, before approaching someone inside the district, I had a chance to go to an outside, objective person. And that was always a nice thing. To have someone that you could call who was removed from the situation who could have a little bit more of an objective perspective on it.

A little later Ingrid also remarked upon the fact that she liked her mentor as a person, and found him to be very approachable. The elements that made it difficult for them to form a close relationship were their very busy schedules, and a lack of free time. Ingrid reported that she found herself making phone calls early in the morning, or late at night.

The fact that my mentor and I were both very busy with our own jobs, and not in the same district. And, although fairly close geographically, still I needed to logistically work out a way to speak with this person, or meet with this person. Sometimes, I needed to do that at 7:00 a.m. or late at night, to talk on the phone, because during the day both of us had some very, very busy job responsibilities.

Ingrid was the only participant who mentioned that she had been invited to attend a general meeting of all of the protégés and mentors who were being placed together into a peer group. She said that there had been an ice-breaker activity conducted by the leaders of this meeting, and that her mentor had followed up by scheduling another meeting so that they could get better acquainted. That second meeting had taken place
shortly before the first meeting of their peer group These first two meetings with her mentor seemed to make her feel comfortable about seeking advice and guidance. She also mentioned that her mentor seemed to be outgoing, and was easy to speak to, so it seemed apparent that the preliminary meetings had served a valuable purpose in helping them build a productive relationship.

... my mentor and I were able to establish a good relationship very quickly. We attended the first ... they had an overall general meeting for all the mentors and mentees, with sort of an icebreaker activity. That was nice to meet some others, but in terms of my mentor and I, my mentor was very good at making sure that we talked, met, and got to know each other a little before engaging in the group activities.

The fact that Ingrid and her mentor were of opposite genders did not seem to be relevant, and there did not appear to have been any problems that arose as a result. Ingrid was adamant about gender not having been an issue of concern. This seemed to be supported by the fact that Ingrid had approached her mentor on a few occasions, after the official requirements had been completed for guidance and advice. In addition, when the researcher asked Ingrid if she had done anything specific to make the relationship mutually advantageous, she said that there had been topics she was asked to research by her mentor that she had investigated because they were useful to her as well.

Actually, because my mentor was looking at some materials or programs for his district, there were times when I voluntarily looked at things with him, or looked at materials, or programs, or discussed things that we were doing. And I do believe he benefited from that.

Discussion of Contextual Factor F: Privacy and Confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality in the relationship to address non-organizational issues in the protégé’s life, and disclose problems.

The questions related to this contextual factor were as follows:
(16) In what ways did the fact that your mentor came from outside of your district make a difference in your relationship with your mentor?

(21) Describe how your mentor did or did not respect your privacy and need for confidentiality.

(22) In what ways was your mentor able to assist you with any non-school related issues?

Summary of Issues Related to Contextual Factor F

When discussing the topic of how it made a difference to work with a mentor from outside of their district, most of the participants seemed to agree that it was generally beneficial. Andrew, Bernadette, Elizabeth, and Ingrid all specifically mentioned having a greater sense of trust that what they discussed would remain confidential. Deborah, Francis, Gregory, and Helen also mentioned that having an outside mentor provided a greater level of objectivity in their discussions. In a couple of cases, particularly with Catherine and Deborah, where the mentors were already retired or else had a prior relationship with the protégés, the participants appeared to assume that this would mean that their discussions with their mentors would be more confidential.

When the researcher asked a specific question about whether the mentors had respected their need for privacy and confidentiality, all of the participants said that they felt that this need had been met. In most cases the mentors had arranged for meetings off-site, in order to facilitate this level of comfort. In Bernadette’s case, where the mentor was applying for a position in the protégé’s district, he had discussed the issue of confidentiality during his Board interview with his protégé, in order to be sure that she was comfortable with what he was going to say. In addition, while most of the
participants seemed to feel comfortable in sharing information with their peer groups, Catherine and Ingrid reported that they had felt they needed to guard what they said at these meetings.

Finally, the researcher asked whether the participants had ever discussed any topics outside of the realm of the State requirements in order to gauge whether the relationship with their mentors had developed to the level of trust where this type of sharing would be possible. Catherine, Elizabeth, Gregory, and Helen all responded that they had never held any discussions with their mentors about any personal topics. Andrew, Bernadette, and Ingrid each said that they had discussed issues of time management and balancing of conflicting demands, such as work and family, with their mentors. Each of the three seemed to feel comfortable with having their mentors adopt this role of personal advisor, and indicated that they had been receptive to these offers of guidance. Deborah and Francis related personal discussions that they had shared with their mentors. Deborah had shared concerns about remaining in her current position due to the high rate of administrative turnover. Francis shared the fact that his mentor had been very proactive in helping him to seek a new position, by writing letters of reference, and making phone calls to administrators who were seeking new employees. Helen did not form a close bond with her own mentor, but shared an anecdote of a time that she had held a lengthy discussion with someone else’s mentor that included a number of personal topics.

The researcher’s conclusion was that the State recognized the importance of this contextual factor by requiring that mentors come from outside of the protégé’s district. All of the participants indicated that they recognized the importance and necessity of this
provision. All of the mentors appeared to have made efforts to protect the privacy of their protégés in a variety of ways, from reassuring discussions to holding off-site meetings. As a result, most of the protégés reported that they felt comfortable in sharing sensitive information with their mentors. However, it was evident that not all of the participants experienced a relationship that was close enough to allow for the sharing of information other than that which was related to the State requirements. One contributing factor may have been a lack of time. Another factor may have been the way in which meetings were conducted, and whether the participants felt that there was a suitable opportunity for the informal sharing of information. The closest relationships appeared to have been formed by those pairs that held private and informal meetings, in addition to the peer group meetings. Once again, as stated in the discussion related to Contextual Factor B, those relationships that appeared to be the strongest, and which included discussions about personal, or “non-organizational” issues, were those in which the protégé and the mentor were both open to widening their discussions to topics unrelated to the State requirements. However, in approximately half of the interviews the protégés made it clear that they were not interested in expanding their relationship with their mentor.

Discussions With the Participants Related to Contextual Factor F

Andrew.

In regard to confidentiality and privacy issues Andrew had a generally positive feeling that his mentor had met his needs in this area. When the researcher asked him whether he felt that it was helpful to work with a mentor from outside his own district he replied,
The very positive side is that I felt very free to ask any kind of question whatsoever, because my tenure wasn't at stake, and I knew that nothing would get back to my superintendent or my colleagues. So it made it very safe. The fact that he lives an hour away added to that safety.

Following up on this topic a few minutes later when the researcher raised the question of privacy again, Andrew repeated that he had been very confident that he could broach any topic without fear that it would be repeated. He cited as an example the fact that there were teachers working in his mentor's district who had previously worked in his district, and that both the mentor and the subject knew these individuals, and they had talked about them freely without a concern about these conversations being repeated. In addition, he knew his mentor was acquainted with his current superintendent, but he said that he was not concerned that his mentor would initiate a contact regarding their work together.

He absolutely respected my confidentiality. While he's friends with my superintendent, I don't think he would ever pick up the phone and call him. I have asked him questions about teachers that he knew in his district, and who are now in my district and I know that he would never, you know, cross the line in any way, shape or form. He's completely trustworthy.

Finally, when Andrew was asked if he felt that his mentor had assisted him with any issues outside the realm of the State requirements, he was able to cite two specific examples, as well as an example of a habit he planned to avoid.

He's helped me with time management questions and organizational skills which certainly spill over into my family life. He has helped me with some career trajectory concepts with regard to the superintendency, which will have an effect on my life. He was—I would term him as a workaholic, and he's told me stories about sleeping in his office, you know, going into work at 2:00 am, and so I don't think he's quite one to go to with helping balance, you know, work and family, even though he had children—he has children.
Bernadette

Bernadette also indicated that she felt safe in discussing any topic with her mentor without having to fear that something she said would be repeated.

I think what it did for me was it allowed me to be extremely honest in my thinking, because I knew that it would in no way impact me as far as in-house. If I had any questions about something or someone I was able to speak freely—I didn’t have to give any names. He really had no idea of who I was talking about. So I think that helped my relationship because I was able to truly go to him with concerns, and not feel like it was going to effect me professionally.

Later, she also mentioned that she was still a bit guarded in what she said during peer group meetings, because of “networking.” In regard to specific issues of confidentiality Bernadette said that she felt completely comfortable that her mentor had respected her privacy. She also cited an example of how her mentor had shown his concern for this area. She related that her mentor had applied for a position in her district during the time that they were working together, and that he had told her in advance what he would say to the Board of Education about their work together.

He absolutely respected my privacy. And he never shared anything that he shouldn’t have. And, as a matter of fact, he interviewed for a position in my current district, and shared with the Board, because he felt that he needed to tell them, and he told me ahead of time, that he was going to tell them that he was my mentor. And he didn’t discuss anything about my action research project, although he said that they would probably find it interesting when I was done. And he shared that with me ahead of time, that he was going to do that, to make sure that I was comfortable. He said, “I don’t want to go in there, and if they ask me I want to tell them the truth. And I said that was fine. But they have to know that I have nothing to do with whether you get the position. So, he respected it.

Lastly, as far as help with other items, Bernadette said that she could not think of anything unrelated to the State requirements with which her mentor might have assisted, although, earlier in the interview she had made references to discussing with her mentor
how she was balancing the demands of completing the State requirements with the 
demands of her work and family.

_Catherine._

Catherine indicated a particularly high comfort level regarding confidentiality 
because of the prior relationship that had existed between her and her mentor. She 
explained that her mentor had once worked as an administrator in her district, but was 
retired when she started in the mentoring program. Although he may have maintained ties 
with other people in the district, she did not appear to be concerned that he would repeat 
any of her confidences to a third party.

When Catherine was asked to discuss privacy and confidentiality issues she said 
that there was never any concern about trusting her mentor, but that she felt she had to be 
very cautious with what she said in her peer group, particularly in regard to a problem she 
was having with a teacher who was struggling.

I felt I could speak to him about anything and that it ended there. I felt I 
couldn’t do that in my peer group . . . I could not tell them about this 
challenge . . . You know, we were talking about challenges, because it was just 
too close to home. I didn’t know who knew who there. If somebody didn’t know 
my Board . . . and they could start putting the pieces together . . . I felt I couldn’t 
come out and talk about it in my peer-mentoring group, but I could talk to him 
about it and know that nobody else would know about it, and yet he’d be able to 
help me out with that. So I definitely felt that he protected my privacy.

Catherine was quick to say that there were no issues outside of the State 
requirements that she had ever discussed with her mentor.

_Deborah._

Deborah did not express many concerns about confidentiality issues. Her mentor 
actually lived in the district where the protégé was working, and had worked about two 
towns away. The mentor did not have any experience working with the population that
the protégé had in her building, and Deborah expressed some frustration about the fact that her mentor did not have more familiarity with the population, or the processes and policies in her district. However, she did state earlier that if she were given the choice of selecting her own mentor, she would have chosen someone from outside of the district. In addition, this mentor was retired, which may have made Deborah feel more confidence about this issue.

When she was asked to reflect on the topic of confidentiality she responded that this had never been an issue of concern, but that she and her mentor had taken certain measures to protect her privacy, such as having closed-door discussions, and avoiding putting anything controversial into an e-mail message.

Oh, my mentor was always very respectful of my need for privacy and confidentiality. She always said to me that any assessment would be discussed in advance before we committed anything to writing. And we always had those discussions behind closed doors. We never discussed any confidential issues via e-mail, either.

When Deborah was asked whether she had ever turned to her mentor for assistance on topics other than the State requirements she did cite an example of a time when they had discussed how to handle the frequent turnover of administrators in her district. She said that at one point she was debating whether to stay in the district or to seek a position elsewhere. Deborah described this as a personal issue, and said that she appreciated getting input on it from her mentor.

My first year as an administrator was unique in that I had three different principals in the course of 1 year. My mentor helped me to cope with all those transitions and to decide whether or not to stay in this district, or to look for a job somewhere else. She helped me to assess what to do, and that was less of a professional issue than a personal one for me. And I appreciated having someone I could share my concerns with. That was very helpful.
Deborah also discussed her relationship with her peer group. She described it as a forum where the members could discuss problematic situations, and offer one another possible solutions. She never expressed any concerns about what she shared with her peers. In addition, she also said that the peer group meetings rotated among the members’ schools, but she never expressed any concern about privacy or confidentiality related to the location of their meetings.

*Elizabeth.*

Elizabeth expressed a great deal of confidence that her relationship with her mentor was one in which her need for privacy was acknowledged and respected. Her mentor was also retired, which may have helped. In addition, Elizabeth may have felt a greater need to make this relationship work successfully because of having asked that she be re-assigned to a new mentor who had the personnel experience she needed. In discussing whether the fact that her mentor was not attached to her present district was important the participant specifically cited increased confidentiality.

I guess that I knew it would be a confidential relationship. Even though you would hope that in any instance. But I knew that it was confidential, and I knew that she would give me information she had learned from having worked in other districts over the years. So I guess there was more openness on my part to listen to what she had to say, because she was bringing in new ideas. And, I guess, just the trust. I think the trust factor was stronger because I didn’t have to worry that, you know, I didn’t have to censor what I was asking.

When Elizabeth was asked to discuss confidentiality she repeated that there had never been a concern, and that her mentor had reassured her that she could discuss any topic openly. “She always reinforced that I could tell her anything, and that she would advise me from her experiences, and I guess from early on there was always a trust factor there.”
When Elizabeth was asked if there had ever been any discussion of unrelated issues, she said that nothing of that nature had ever arisen.

*Francis.*

Francis was originally assigned a mentor who was from a district neighboring his own, which was also the sending district where his middle students would continue to high school. He initially discussed the fact that she actually knew more about the people and the politics of the area than he did when he first arrived. But that factor did not appear to cause him to feel any concern regarding issues of privacy or confidentiality. Shortly afterwards Francis changed to a new district. When he was asked about whether his mentor’s distance from his new district was relevant, he replied that his level of trust in her had already been established, but that she brought a new perspective.

Because at that point we had already built up our relationship and she knew, and I knew, that we could talk about nearly anything. We had already built that trust with one another, and I would just share with her stories. And the two districts are so different that it was actually very refreshing. So she would just listen, and it didn't make a difference or change anything.

When Francis was asked whether there had ever been any specific issue regarding privacy or confidentiality he repeated that he and his mentor had established a very trusting relationship, and that he was comfortable in discussing any topic with her.

When Francis was asked about whether his mentor and he had ever discussed any unrelated topics, he replied that his mentor had become very proactive in helping him to search for a new position, by acting as reference, and even making calls to prospective employers on his behalf.

Yes, like when I was looking for a new job last year, and sending my resume around, I listed her as a reference. And she wrote a letter for me as well. She knew the superintendent in one of the districts where I was applying, and said she
called him—she said she did anyway—to give me a reference. So, in that regard she helped me out quite a lot.

**Gregory.**

When asked about whether his relationship with his mentor was affected by working with someone from outside of his district, Gregory explained that he understood that the purpose was to provide confidentiality. He said that he realized that if someone were having difficulties in this regard that having an outside mentor would be very important. But he also stressed that this was never an issue for him personally, and that he would have been satisfied to have his current principal act as his mentor.

Now, my understanding is that the mentor is there to help you, even if the relationship that you’re currently working in doesn’t ... isn’t successful. And that’s one of the reasons why the person is from outside of the organization, and that makes a whole lot of sense. So perhaps my having someone assigned to me circumvented some potential problems in that way. But my working relationships with everyone at the school are phenomenal, so in the end it wouldn’t have been a conflict. But I can see how if something wasn’t working out, then having that outside mentor would have been very good.

When Gregory was asked whether privacy or confidentiality was ever an issue, he dismissed that topic with a very definitive “no.” When the researcher re-phrased the question in an attempt to draw out a more detailed response, Gregory would only reply that there had never been any issue of concern regarding privacy.

Gregory was also very definite in saying that he and his mentor had never discussed any topic outside the realm of the State requirements. He explained a little later that his mentor was also the mentor to most of the other six to eight members of his peer group. This mentor was also retired at the time he acted as Gregory’s mentor. As mentioned previously, this factor may have increased the participant’s level of confidence regarding confidentiality. In addition, since all of the peers shared the same mentor, the
level of trust that they all shared in one another may have been increased by that factor as well. Gregory insisted that his relationships with everyone around him, including his current principal, were very strong. As a result, issues of privacy and confidentiality seemed to be unimportant to him. However, because Gregory was very quick to insist that he had never discussed any topic outside the State requirements with his mentor or peers, the researcher concluded that he might have been very reserved about ever introducing any controversial or sensitive topic into a group discussion.

_Helen._

When discussing the nature of her relationship with her mentor, Helen also said that she felt more comfortable in confiding some controversial topics because her mentor came from outside of her district. She added that the fact that he was removed from some situations made him more objective than colleagues within her district.

_Well, I think that it made me a little bit more comfortable talking about some of the things that were going on. For example, some of the things within the administrative team, or issues regarding some of the Board members and how to handle them, and knowing that he wasn't himself involved in any of that. So I kind of trusted what he said, maybe a little bit more than I would have trusted my fellow building principal._

Although she liked the fact that her mentor came from outside of her district, Helen said that she wished her mentor had more time available to visit her school. She also mentioned that she and her mentor had a hard time finding opportunities to work together, outside of the group meetings. As a result, it seemed as if her relationship with her mentor was somewhat limited. When the researcher asked her directly whether there had ever been any issues regarding privacy she said that there had never been any problem or concern.
In addition, when the researcher asked Helen whether she had ever discussed any unrelated topics, she replied that they had never discussed anything outside of the State requirements. Previously she had mentioned an anecdote about having a very productive conversation with her Vice Principal’s mentor, and it may be that she would have been willing to engage in a broader range of conversation topics if there had been more opportunities available, or if she had felt that there was a stronger connection between them.

So I actually had a one-on-one with her mentor, and really liked her a lot. We sat for about 2 hours, and just had a really good conversation. I kind of felt like she was . . . and I said to her at the beginning, “I know you’re not my mentor, but feel free to jump in and offer advice at any time.” And it was great. So given the nature of the different personalities, I would say that there are some differences between the mentors themselves.

_Ingrid._

Ingrid was very much aware of privacy and confidentiality issues. While she agreed that there was a need for her to have someone who could be objective that she could confide in, Ingrid also pointed out that it took a little time before she felt certain that she could share confidential information about her district with an outsider. In addition, Ingrid was also sensitive to the fact that she needed to prove to her mentor that she could be trusted.

Well, I had to really develop a relationship of trust with that mentor, in terms of confidentiality. Because, of course, if we were discussing things that might have been of a sensitive nature within my district, I needed to feel confident that my mentor, and I were discussing whatever my needs were, without discussing the district. So I definitely needed to feel that my mentor and I could have that type of back-and-forth trust. And for my mentor also, if he was going to share anything about where he had previously worked, he had to know that he could trust me to see that information as confidential.
A little earlier Ingrid had mentioned her awareness of the importance of being able to test ideas with an outside mentor, who might be more objective.

When the researcher asked Ingrid about privacy and confidentiality issues, she was able to cite specific examples of how her mentor had arranged for numerous off-site meetings in order to make her feel comfortable about holding an open discussion about controversial issues. She said that she felt her mentor had gone to great lengths to acknowledge this need.

My mentor went to many extremes, or efforts as necessary to do that. And if there was something sensitive to discuss, he made himself very accessible, where I could call him at home in the evening, or go meet early before my school day started, if we needed to discuss something. And if there was something that I felt I wanted to discuss with him away from my building, we’d meet at a neutral location, or meet in his professional space.

In regard to whether the mentor and this protégé shared any conversations regarding other topics, Ingrid said that her mentor had expressed concerns about the workload that the program entailed, and that on more than one occasion he had advised her, and other members of her peer group, about the importance of striking a balance between their personal and professional lives.

Well, my mentor, having had years of experience as an administrator, was always speaking with me, and others that he was mentoring, about striking a balance between your professional and your personal responsibilities, and he was very careful to check and make sure that there was no time of feeling overwhelmed by trying to accomplish everything—including the extra demands of this program.

Summary

The discussions with the study participants regarding their experiences in New Jersey’s mentoring program led the researcher to conclude that their perceptions seemed to be generally mixed. When they were speaking about issues such as the meetings with
their peer groups, or about having received valuable feedback and guidance on various issues of concern that they had brought to their mentors, the participants were generally positive. They usually reported that they felt the peer group or the mentor had provided what they needed. In some cases the participants also reported that they had formed bonds with either their peers or their mentors that would be of continuing benefit in the near future.

However, the researcher also found that all of the participants perceived some negative aspects to the program. While in some cases this amounted to simple annoyance or confusion, in several other instances the participants expressed a good deal of anger and unhappiness about having been required to participate in this program. In most cases the participants were particularly unhappy about the way in which they were asked to complete the eight explorations and the action research project. There was a very direct correlation between the satisfaction expressed by those protégés who were given input into how the requirements were to be completed, and the dissatisfaction experienced by the protégés who had no input into how the requirements were to be completed. Some of the participants remarked on the fact that they were aware that some members of their peer groups, who had different mentors, were doing either more or less work than other protégés were required to complete. Several protégés complained that there was too much variance in how different mentors interpreted the requirements and how they should be accomplished. In addition, one of the most frequent comments was that the formal requirements of the program were too similar to work they had already completed during their graduate studies.
Unanticipated Findings

An unanticipated finding, as noted in the discussion above, was that five participants reported that they probably would have developed a more meaningful relationship with their mentor if the work in which they were engaged had greater meaning for them. But they resented having to complete the State-required activities and, as a result, transferred their unhappiness to the mentors who had to oversee the completion of those requirements.

One other outlier finding was that the additional year required by the State may have also allowed the protégés the opportunity to develop deeper and more long-lasting relationships with the members of their peer groups. As noted, several participants made references to the fact that they attached an equal or greater value to these relationships than to those formed with their mentors. The usual reason given for this was that they shared more similar experiences, or shared similar needs with those peers, and that they had more time in which to bond together.

A further discussion of conclusions related to specific contextual factors, as well as a discussion of general conclusions regarding the State’s mentoring program, will be presented in Chapter V. Issues and implications raised by these and other findings of the study will also be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

In 2005 the state of New Jersey made significant changes to the licensure requirements for beginning school principals. New administrators were required to enter into a 2-year mentoring program that included completion of Eight Explorations and an Action Research Project, which are based on the standards established by the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The first cohort to experience the new program had just completed this requirement at the time that the interviews for this study were completed. At the time that these findings were being organized the second cohort was completing the first year and were entering the second half of the program.

The present study was undertaken after many conversations with colleagues indicated that serious issues of concern existed regarding the mentoring component of the new State requirements. A partial list of those concerns included: whether the length of the program is either too short or too long; whether the mentors are adequately trained, and how they are selected and matched to the protégés; whether the revised Explorations and the Action Research Project are well structured learning tools, or overly similar to university training; and whether this more formalized 2-year mentoring program is a satisfying, productive and useful experience for the protégés.
The primary research question for the study was: What are the reported experiences of nine principals who are involved in mentoring relationships as part of their professional education as school leaders?

Sub-questions included the following: (a) How have Samier's contextual factors affected these mentoring relationships? And (b) What changes to the current program, if any, would the protégés suggest?

In order to better understand the experiences of the 9 school administrators, and whether in their experiences the contextual factors outlined by Samier (2000) had a bearing on their relationships with their mentors, the researcher conducted a series of interviews with them over a period of 5 months, while each of them was either still completing their second year of mentoring, or else had just recently completed their second year in the program newly revised by New Jersey's Department of Education. The 9 participants were part of the first cohort to experience the changes to the state's required mentoring program for beginning principals.

This chapter begins with a discussion of specific conclusions regarding individual contextual factors in response to the first sub-question. This is followed by some general conclusions suggested by the findings of the study presented in Chapter IV. In addition, in order to address the second sub-question, the researcher presents suggestions for the program made by the participants. This is followed by a discussion of implications for policy and practice. The final section makes suggestions for future research.

Summary and Discussion of Specific Contextual Factors

Eugenie Samier (2000) argues that a number of contextual factors are necessary for a successful mentoring relationship. The six that are especially applicable to
educational administration are: opportunities for contact and choice in selection of each other; sufficient time to develop a relationship; regulations and procedures allowing the participants to negotiate goals and activities; accommodation of diversity and uniqueness of thinking so as to tailor experiences that facilitate collaboration and alliances; opportunities to engage in relationship-building activities; and privacy and confidentiality in the relationship.

In all cases the contextual factors were highly relevant. In any instance where the relationship between the mentor and the protégé was weaker, it was usually related to whether the contextual factors were considered to be important, as evidenced by whether the mentors or the designers of the program incorporated them into the mentoring relationship. In the cases where the Department of Education has incorporated any of these contextual factors into their program, it appeared to have been more accidental than purposeful, because of the apparently random manner in which they were being implemented, as well as the lack of training in these contextual factors provided to the mentors.

Contextual Factor A is: Opportunities for contact and individual choice in selection of each other, particularly across hierarchical or departmental boundaries. In discussing how this contextual factor influenced their relationship the interview participants had mixed feelings. Initially, all but one indicated that they would have liked having some input into the selection of their mentor. But, upon deeper reflection, their answers changed slightly. While four participants subsequently said that having a voice in the selection process did not matter to them, two of those respondents had actually been given some opportunity for input into the process. Two other participants said that
they would have been satisfied with anyone at all, but one of those worried because, while she had been very happy with her mentor, she knew that other members of her peer group had not had such positive experiences. All of the interview participants were divided fairly evenly on the subject of whether they would have preferred a mentor with whom they had some prior relationship. Those who argued in favor would have liked either a former colleague or college professor. Those who argued against a prior relationship felt that this would allow for greater opportunities to form new relationships or gain a wider range of new experiences.

In regard to being able to reach across hierarchical or departmental boundaries, there were also some differences of opinion. First, in regard to hierarchy, none of the interview participants had any real input into the level of their mentor. The one participant, who had pre-arranged with a former colleague that he would ask to be assigned as her mentor, was not interested in his rank. He happened to be a principal, rather than a superintendent, but this factor seemed generally unimportant. A few of the interview participants indicated that they expected to use their relationship with their mentor for networking purposes in the future. But none of them indicated they had been considering networking as a factor in deciding whether they were satisfied with their relationship. Only one participant related that his mentor had actively helped him in seeking a new position during the period while the mentoring relationship was still in effect.

The departmental issue seemed to have a greater importance to the interview participants. In one case the protégé had asked the Department of Education for a new mentor in the second year of her program, when she switched to a new position as a
director of personnel. As noted above, the Department of Education acceded to her request and changed her mentor. In almost all of the other examples cited, the mentors were either currently serving as principals, were retired principals, or had been a principal before moving on to another position. The one anomaly was a mentor who was a director of curriculum, and had never served as a principal. As noted in the discussion of this contextual factor in Chapter IV, this participant was highly dissatisfied with her mentoring experience, and had turned to other colleagues, who were principals, for advice on any issue that was not related to the State requirements.

The researcher’s overall conclusion regarding this contextual factor was that those respondents who attached a greater level of importance to their relationship with their mentor generally seemed to care more about having input into the selection process. On the other hand, those who viewed the relationship as temporary or less important to their professional development were less interested in having a voice in the selection, and were much less concerned by the fact that they did not get input into the selection process.

Contextual Factor B is: Sufficient time to develop the relationship (two to five years). In reviewing the responses to the interview questions the researcher found that 5 of the participants did not feel that their relationship with their mentors had a significant value to them after the 2-year period was concluded. All of these 5 participants placed blame for this lack on either the nature of the work that they did together, or on the lack of time spent together engaged in meaningful dialogue. As a result, none of these participants felt a desire to extend their mentoring experience beyond the required 2-year period.
Four of the interview participants reported that their relationships with their mentors had a significant value to them after the 2-year period was concluded. Of these 4, 2 of the participants also reported that their relationships had transcended the Department of Education’s requirements by becoming broader and more all encompassing. This also highlights the finding that the State requirements had a significant impact on the nature of the relationships between the protégés and their mentors. Of all of the interview participants these 2 who had broadened their relationships reported the highest level of satisfaction with their mentoring experiences.

The researcher’s overall conclusion about this contextual factor, based on the findings above, was that the 2-year duration of the State’s program was only beneficial to those participants who were either willing to allow their relationship to develop further, or who were given the opportunity to explore other topics with their mentors, beyond the required activities. Those participants who limited themselves to only the completion of the required activities were generally eager to conclude the relationship, in its official capacity, as quickly as possible.

Contextual Factor C is: Regulations and procedures allowing them to negotiate goals and activities. As noted in the discussion above, this contextual factor appeared to have the most significant impact on whether the protégés felt that their mentoring relationships had been satisfying or useful. In the instances where the mentors had allowed their protégés input into how the State requirements were to be completed, those protégés reported that their experiences had been the most positive. In the example cited in the discussion above, the protégé who had an ongoing dialogue with her mentor regarding the completion of the requirements also reported that her relationship
transcended the limits of the State requirements, to the point where she was taking on the role of a leader among her peers, when her mentor was absent, even though other mentors were present.

For those protégés whose mentors had a more narrowly proscribed view of how the requirements were to be completed, and who allowed their protégés the most limited input into decision-making, there was a correspondingly high rate of dissatisfaction. This feeling of satisfaction, or lack of satisfaction, on the part of the protégés extended into all areas of the relationship, including peer group meetings and one-on-one discussions. These same interview participants also expressed the greatest level of anger about having been required to participate in this program, and about how the program was structured.

The researcher’s overall conclusions about this contextual factor were that the strong negative emotions expressed by the participants who felt that they had little input into activities, and who felt that they had been given little latitude to negotiate how activities were completed, seem to indicate that this contextual factor has a powerful impact on a mentoring relationship. Conversely, those mentors who allowed their protégés greater input seemed to have enjoyed more positive and productive relationships. It was particularly interesting to the researcher to note that this contextual factor, or its absence, seemed to have the greatest impact on the emotions of the protégés. In addition, in the relationships where this factor was most obviously absent, the protégés reported that their mentoring experiences had the least overall value to them.

Contextual Factor D is: Accommodation of the diversity and uniqueness of mentor and protégé in styles of thinking and working, in order that the mentor can create
experiences tailored to the unique vision of professional practice, especially those facilitating collaboration and alliances.

During the course of these interviews the researcher found that this contextual factor was absent from many of these mentoring relationships. Three of the participants reported that their mentors had allowed some level of negotiation regarding the completion of the requirements. These 3 participants also reported the greatest level of satisfaction with their mentoring experiences. Those same 3 mentors also made the greatest effort to facilitate collaborative relationships between the members of the peer groups. Those protégés correspondingly reported the greatest level of satisfaction with their interactions with their peer groups.

The second group of 3 protégés and mentors had mixed experiences related to this contextual factor. The protégés reported that their mentors did not allow them much latitude for negotiation of how the required activities were to be completed. As a result these participants reported that they felt a low level of satisfaction with their mentoring experience. Conversely, these participants reported that their mentors had made efforts to facilitate collaboration among the members of their respective peer groups. As a result, these protégés said that although they were dissatisfied with their relationships with their mentors, they did feel that they had formed valuable relationships with the members of their peer groups.

The last group of 3 participants reported that their mentors did not allow them to negotiate how the requirements were to be completed, which led to a lack of satisfaction with their mentoring relationships in general. In addition, they also reported that their mentors did not make any attempt to facilitate any type of collaboration between the
members of their peer groups. These 3 participants all reported a lack of satisfaction with their relationships with their peer groups as well.

The researcher’s overall conclusion about this contextual factor is that there was a very direct correlation between the level of satisfaction, or lack thereof, with their mentoring experiences expressed by the protégés whose mentors allowed them to negotiate how the requirements were to be completed, as opposed to those who did not permit negotiation. The same correlation of satisfaction or dissatisfaction existed for those protégés whose mentors tried to facilitate collaboration between the members of the peer groups, and those who did not. This factor, or its absence was, therefore, a very important part of these relationships. In addition, this was another factor that caused subjects to express strong emotional feelings about their relationships.

Contextual Factor E is: Opportunities to engage in relationship-building activities, especially in developing dialogue. As indicated above, the interview subjects were evenly split between those who felt a desire to strengthen their relationships with their mentors and those who did not have a desire to further their relationship. For those protégés who were open to a deeper relationship, the opportunity for informal meetings was appreciated, as were the one-on-one discussions about specific building issues. The protégés who did not develop a deeper relationship with their mentors also reported that they did not have as many opportunities for informal meetings, or opportunities to talk about their individual concerns. In addition, they reported that their mentors either lacked skills that they felt they needed, such as having held a principal’s position, or else that there was a problem with lack of time.
Similarly, all of the participants were divided as to whether there was a need for some type of relationship-building activity. Four of the participants felt there was no need, although one of these said she would employ some type of activity if she ever became a mentor herself. The other participants reported that they had engaged in some form of relationship-building activity. While none of the participants reported that gender was an issue for them, 2 of the respondents said that they felt that it was easier to work with a mentor of the same gender. Two other participants stressed that they were accustomed to working with colleagues of the opposite gender.

When asked if they felt that they had contributed something to the mentoring relationship, most of the participants said that their mentors had shown an interest in their research data, or else that their mentors had appeared to enjoy being a part of professional discussions with protégés or with peer groups during their meetings.

The researcher’s overall conclusion about this contextual factor was that all of the participants felt that there had been adequate time in which to develop their relationships with their mentors. Even the participants who were dissatisfied with their relationships due to frustration over the required activities, or how the mentors wanted the requirements to be completed, still seemed to feel that there had been adequate opportunities for dialogue, either with their mentor or with their peers. The participants who were satisfied with their relationships were even more adamant that there had been opportunities for interactions, and they were able to cite examples of things that their mentors had done to facilitate closer collaborations.

Contextual Factor F is: Privacy and confidentiality in the relationship in order to address non-organizational issues in the protégé’s life, and to disclose any personal or
job-related problems, issues or concerns. Throughout the interviews all of the participants expressed confidence that their mentors had respected their privacy and need for confidentiality. Two participants, however, felt that they had to be careful about what they said during their peer group meetings. Their level of confidence was usually related to the amount of time that they had spent together, with those who had the greatest number of communications also feeling the greatest amount of confidence.

In regard to whether their relationships ever extended to the point where they discussed anything of a personal nature, about half of the participants said that they never discussed anything outside of the required topics. Three participants said that they had discussed issues of time management and strategies for coping with stress. Three participants reported that they had discussed non-organizational, personal topics.

The researcher’s overall conclusion about this contextual factor is that it was highly important to all of the participants’ relationships. It was very relevant to the participants for whom a close relationship was less important. It was even more essential for those participants who developed a stronger relationship with their mentors.

As evidenced by the discussion above, all of the contextual factors have a highly significant impact upon the quality of a mentoring experience. The researcher began by examining the various factors individually in order to gain a better understanding of the overall experiences of the participants in the study. The following discussion will provide summary conclusions about the importance of the contextual factors and how they affected the overall mentoring experiences of the research participants.
General Conclusions

As the researcher opened Chapter I with an allusion to Homer’s *Odyssey*, it seems appropriate to make another one here. All of the contextual factors that have been discussed previously help to constitute the full tapestry of a mentoring experience. In a manner similar to the way that Penelope pulled threads out of her weaving over a period of many nights, this researcher has isolated each of these contextual factors here, and analyzed them in detail. However, it is essential to remember that they are interconnected, and that they have less meaning if examined individually rather than as a “whole cloth.” This follows the “Systems” approach of Senge (1990), and the interconnectedness of field theory pointed out by Wheatley (1999). Thus, it is now important to examine the data from the perspective of how the contextual factors interact, and how they constitute a more complete mentoring experience when fully integrated.

Six of the contextual factors identified by Samier (2000) as necessary for a successful mentoring relationship, and which are most relevant to the field of educational administration, are as follows:

A. Opportunities for contact and individual choice in selection of each other, particularly across hierarchical and departmental boundaries.
B. Sufficient time to develop the relationship (two to five years).
C. Regulations and procedures allowing them to negotiate goals and activities.
D. Accommodation of the diversity and uniqueness of mentor and protégé in styles of thinking and working, in order that the mentor can create experiences tailored to the unique vision of professional practice, especially those facilitating collaboration and alliances.
E. Opportunities to engage in relationship-building activities, especially in developing dialogue.
F. Privacy and confidentiality in the relationship to address non-organizational issues in the protégé’s life, and disclose problems (pp. 93-94).

As evidenced by the interviews cited in Chapter IV, the contextual factors identified by Samier (2000) were all highly important and relevant. The 6 factors that
were most relevant to relationships between educational administrators were seen to be essential ingredients for a successful mentoring experience. In the cases where protégés experienced weaker, less successful relationships the root cause could usually be traced back to the absence of 1 or more of these factors. Those protégés who cared the most about establishing a successful relationship from the onset wanted to have some type of input into the selection process. Two participants did have this input, and another developed a good relationship because her mentor focused on other factors, such as allowing her to negotiate how tasks were to be completed. It appeared that other, less successful relationships might have been stronger if the participants had been given more input into the selection process. The time factor was also beneficial to those participants who developed a strong relationship due to the incorporation of other contextual factors. This research study indicated that the year that the State added to the program was only a hindrance to those who developed an unsatisfactory relationship, if the other contextual factors were absent.

Allowing the protégés to negotiate how required activities would be completed, and tailoring the activities to suit the needs of the protégés seemed to be the most important of all. When mentors incorporated these 2 factors they generally also developed the strongest relationships. The absence of these 2 factors produced the greatest level of anger in the protégés, and resulted in the weakest relationships.

Engaging in relationship-building activities appeared to benefit all of the relationships studied here, but was most commonly referenced by those who experienced stronger relationships overall. Lastly, the importance of maintaining privacy and confidentiality was regarded as essential in all of the relationships that were examined here.
Sub-Question Number Two: Recommendations By Research Participants

The second sub-question in this study was intended to elicit suggestions by the protégés for improvement to this part of the State’s requirements for licensing. These suggestions generally fell into 3 different categories: program activities; time issues; and mentor roles and selection. A couple of other suggestions that fell outside of these categories will also be discussed.

Program Activities

Peer Group Meetings

Andrew and Bernadette thought that the Round Table discussions during meetings of the peer groups should consist of a greater number of “case study” or “In-box” topics, in which protégés and mentors could all contribute ideas for dealing with specific situations or issues. Catherine found that being permitted to bring up her own issues of concern with her group helped her to consider a number of differing points of view. She also liked the fact that her own mentor established a specific theme for each of their meetings. Ingrid also recommended that the peer group meetings should have specific agendas, which were set in advance. She complained that the mentors who conducted the meetings she attended did not appear to always agree on meeting agendas, and that they seemed to her to be disorganized and poorly planned. Elizabeth suggested that the Round Table discussions should be the primary focus of the mentoring program, and that these should receive greater emphasis than the explorations and the research projects.

Action Research Projects and The Eight Explorations

Several participants complained about the lack of specific directions for how each activity should be completed or presented. This lack of clear directions often appeared to
lead to each mentor having to decide individually how activities should be completed. Most of the participants included in this study were very much aware that peers in their own cohort groups who had different mentors, or peers in groups meeting nearby, were often asked to do either more or less work than they were, or were directed to do presentations or written activities following significantly different criteria.

Andrew, Bernadette, Elizabeth, Helen, and Ingrid all felt that the action research project should be made much shorter, with fewer parts. A number of them also felt that the presentations of research projects were too lengthy. Catherine commented on the fact that her PowerPoint presentation consisted of dozens of slides, while other people in her group were permitted to make much briefer presentations. Bernadette and Deborah added that the research should be more job-embedded in order to make the project more useful. Deborah suggested that the project might be more of an “overview” of typical administrative work that she had accomplished during a specified period of time. Gregory reported the opposite concern. He said that when he switched districts midway through the program he had to begin his action-research project all over again because the first one was too specific to the previous school. He advocated more general projects.

Similar issues concerning criteria surfaced in regard to the eight explorations. Francis reported that the explorations, as interpreted by his mentor, were very specific to his first school district. But that when he switched to a different district he found that they had little relevance. The result was that he had to do a number of items over again. He also recommended that the explorations should be less site-specific.

Some mentors chose to cover the explorations during Round Table discussions, with protégés simply sharing ideas while taking brief notes, while other mentors required
protégés to write out several pages for each one in advance of the group meetings, followed by more formal sharing of data, such as the creation of additional PowerPoint presentations. Several participants described these assignments as being redundant of topics they had studied in graduate school, or that the nature of the assignments was too much like a “homework assignment,” both of which they frequently resented. Ingrid said that the similarity to graduate school was “insulting” and a step backwards for her. She recommended that the State should coordinate these activities with area graduate schools in order to lessen the amount of redundancy, as well as to provide better graduate school preparation for the subsequent mentoring experience.

Time Issues

All of the participants in this study complained about having to make time available for meetings with mentors and peer groups. All of them also complained about the fact that they had to find time to complete the required activities on top of their already busy workloads. The participants all recommended that the State should look for ways to lessen the time demands of the program. In particular they all recommended that there should be fewer written requirements. Helen and Ingrid also suggested that school districts should make professional days available to protégés so they could either meet with their mentors or work on their assignments.

Duration of the Mentoring Program

Elizabeth and Ingrid felt that the program should be reduced back down to one year. Elizabeth suggested that only participants in the NJ-Excel program should be required to complete a 2-year program. Ingrid was frustrated by the fact that at the start of her second year in the program several first-year protégés joined her peer group. This
resulted in many repetitious discussions. She felt that a 1-year program would have been adequate. Alternatively, she recommended that the peer groups should be limited to only the original cohort, even if mentors have multiple protégés at different stages of the program.

*Mentor Roles and Mentor Selection*

*Role of the Mentor*

Andrew, Helen, and Ingrid suggested that there should be more opportunities for protégés to shadow their mentors, or for the mentors to have opportunities to visit the protégé’s school and observe them for an extended period.

A few participants were also concerned about the mentor acting as a judge of their professional qualifications. They felt that the mentors could make very subjective decisions regarding their abilities, which might not be based on adequate substantive data. They felt that the mentors were in a position to make very arbitrary decisions, which might negatively impact them professionally. Andrew suggested that the evaluation that mentors conduct might be limited to a simple checklist, or that the State formalize some other simple means of showing that requirements have been satisfactorily completed. Helen recommended that an appeal process should be created in case the protégé felt that a mentor’s evaluation was unfair. Alternatively, she also suggested that the protégé’s direct supervisor should be given more input into the evaluation process.

*Selection of Mentors*

Catherine and Helen felt that mentors should be paired with protégés based on geographic location. Catherine was concerned about others in her group whom she knew to have experienced problems in arranging meetings with their mentors because wide
distances separated them. Gregory felt very inconvenienced by the fact that he had to
drive nearly an hour in order to meet with his mentor and with his peer group. He also
recommended that each school district should have some input into the selection of the
mentors of their employees, in order to help ensure that the mentor had experience with
their student population. Ingrid also felt that the school district should have input, or else
that the mentor should be in-district in order to preserve confidentiality. She also felt that
this would make it easier to schedule meeting times.

Francis suggested that only retirees should be assigned as mentors, because this
would allow them more time to visit the protégé’s school for extended periods. He also
suggested that mentors should be paired with protégés according to their work
experiences. For instance, his mentor had never worked as a principal, and often deferred
his questions and concerns to other mentors within their peer group.

Other Program Issues

Andrew and Catherine both mentioned concerns over the cost of the mentoring
program. Both of them felt that the protégés’ school district ought to be required to cover
this expense for their employees.

Elizabeth reported that the post-assessment that she had completed on-line was
not useful to her, because after a 2-year period had elapsed since completing the initial
survey, she simply didn’t remember how she had responded to the pre-assessment
questions. She suggested that the previous answers should be made available to
participants for the purpose of comparison. She also recommended that data from the pre-
assessment should be made available to the protégé’s mentor, to guide them in creating
activities that better fit the individual needs of their protégés.
Implications For Policy and Practice

The implications of this study are important for researchers, state officers, school administrators, and others who are interested in mentoring programs for school leaders. While it is not possible to make large generalizations from such a small sample of participants, it is evident that the experiences of the participants examined here agree with much of the current research in the field. Kram (1985), Daresh and Playko (1994, 1995, 1996), Tichey (1983), Peters and Waterman (1982) and Peper (1994) were some of the early advocates of mentoring programs either in the corporate world, or for aspiring school leaders. Each made arguments that mentoring programs could be successful if certain conditions were met. Samier (2000) distilled much of this thinking into the contextual factors that have been examined in this research study. In recent years the State of New Jersey has created a mentoring program that has some of the contextual factors shown to be necessary for successful relationships, but not all of them. As a result most of the participants in this study, and possibly many other protégés throughout the state, exit the program feeling less than satisfied that the experience was productive or useful to their professional development. The results of this study appear to indicate that the State Department of Education could make improvements to the program easily, and with minimal expense, by incorporating all of the contextual factors into their mentoring program. If the State is to avoid the pitfalls of “corporate” models criticized by Sergiovanni (1990, 1992, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1999, 2001) the program needs to be a more open-ended one where the participants have more input into the process, and where “the leaders and the followers are united in pursuit of common goals” (1990, p. 23).
The findings in this study indicate that it is essential for the mentors to be properly trained to be aware of all of the contextual factors so that they can use them together in an integrated manner. Integrating all of the contextual factors within their relationships should create a much greater number of truly meaningful and productive relationships for participants in the State’s mentoring program. As also noted by Spiro, Mattis and Mittgang (2007) and Gagen and Bowie (2005) the training of mentors is essential for a successful program. In New Jersey’s program improved training of the mentors could potentially result in their being more open to allowing the protégés greater input into the selection of activities. Increased input might also help to ensure that the protégés find the required activities to be more meaningful and more relevant to their professional development. This follows LaPointe and Davis (2006), Orr (2006, 2007), Anthes (2002), Andrews and Grogan (2002) and Rothman (2008) who described successful programs in other states where close collaboration between mentors and protégés helped to forge successful relationships. If the mentor selection process has to be managed by the State, and if the assignment of mentors continues to be somewhat random, then improved training of the mentors is even more essential in order to improve the chances for a productive relationship. Muse, Thomas, and Wasdan (1992), Walker and Stott (1994) and Milstein et al. (1993) make the same point in arguing that the training of mentors should be a regular and ongoing process, rather than a 1-time only proposition.

Giving the participants some input into the selection process is a difficult issue. Zey (1984) suggested that many unsuccessful mentoring relationships failed because the programs were required, rather than voluntary, too formalized, or that the protégé had no
choice in the selection of a mentor. Gray, Fry, Bottoms and O’Neill (2007) argue that protégés have no useful criteria for making their own choices of mentors. Blackman and Fenwick (2000) suggest that formalized pairings of mentors and protégés should allow for better gender and racial equity. While the data in this study seem to suggest that the research participants would have had stronger relationships with their mentors if they had had some type of input into the selection process, the data also suggest that most of the participants felt that there was an overriding need for the State to make the selections for them. An important implication of the study is that there should be some degree of flexibility by the State regarding the pairings of mentor and protégé. Although the findings presented here show that there are very good reasons for the State to maintain control of the process, it also appears that the selection process should not be totally random. Some of the compromises suggested earlier may create better combinations, such as allowing protégés to identify a small pool of potential mentors they know of outside of their own districts. Another possibility would be to only pair protégés with mentors who have had similar professional experiences, or who have some experience with student populations that are similar to the population in the protégé’s district.

It might also be possible for New Jersey to adopt the Mentor Identification Instrument developed by Geismar, Morris and Lieberman (2000) in order to remove some of the randomness from the selection process. Improved relationships would probably also be accomplished if there were better-organized relationship-building opportunities, and if instruction in the use of these types of activities could also be incorporated into the training of mentors. Finally, improved training of mentors, which resulted in stronger relationships, should also lead to the protégés ultimately feeling that
the increased duration of the mentoring program is a benefit that results in greater professional development.

The issue that caused all of the participants to express the greatest level of unhappiness with the mentoring program was related to how the requirements were completed. Therefore, these findings suggest that allowing the protégés to have greater input into how the activities are completed might result in changing some of the negative perceptions about the requirements. Future protégés might then see the overall experience as more beneficial to them, as opposed to some of the participants in this study who viewed them as a series of unpleasant chores that needed to be completed with as little difficulty as possible.

Another important issue is that New Jersey has adopted a program that has some similarities to what is happening in other states, but that there are also wide differences with what is happening elsewhere. It may be that an improved use of the available research, such as that conducted by the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, or the International Mentoring Association, which have both assembled large data bases of current research on mentoring, would enable the facilitators to adopt the most up-to-date methods for mentor training and retention, as well as improving the activities and requirements for protégés.

Finally, the data presented here show clearly that most of the interview participants expressed some dissatisfaction with one or more of the various elements of their mentoring experiences. The majority of these participants exited the program feeling some degree of dissatisfaction with their experiences, and that the mentoring experience had not fully met their expectations. This is highly unfortunate given that mentoring has
so much potential to be a positive and productive experience. It seems very clear that the program as it currently exists needs to be re-examined and improved. One strategy that has proven effective in other areas is for the program organizers to establish a working partnership with the major universities in the state who all have a vested interest in these programs. Studies conducted by Orr and Orphanos (2007) and Cohen, Darling-Hammond, and LaPointe (2006) examined programs in California, Mississippi, Connecticut, Kentucky, New York, Delaware, Georgia and North Carolina, which were considered to be exemplars in developing high caliber principal preparation programs. Almost all of these programs have established cooperative partnerships, wherein the universities in these states either lend expert advice, or else they have actually taken over running these programs entirely. A partnership similar to the ones cited in these studies would also serve to widen the pool of available mentors, and it would provide an avenue for high quality training of mentors. In addition, it would allow university scholars improved access to schools, which could improve their knowledge and understanding of the needs of administrators and their mentors. A continually expanding research-base would also become more readily available to program administrators in order to foster growth and changes, when needed. Perhaps the shift to a university-state partnership would alleviate some of the perceived problems pointed out by the participants in this study. Lastly, a university-state partnership would help to eliminate program redundancies; facilitate the creation of clear guidelines, and consistent criteria for the completion of requirements; and might create the conditions needed for greater consistency in the application of all of the contextual factors within a mentoring program.
Recommendations For Future Research

Margaret Wheatley (1999) says, “Consider how different it is, in quantum imagery, when data is recognized as a wave, rich in potential interpretations, and completely dependant on observers to evoke different meanings” (p. 67). The following suggestions are offered in the hope that further explorations and discussion of the ideas presented here may lead to increasing growth and improvement in the mentoring of school leaders.

This study was limited to 9 participants, working in 6 districts that were generally middle class or above. Eight of the 9 participants were in districts with a District Factor Grouping of G/H or I, marking them as having low populations of at-risk students.

One recommendation for future research would be to widen the sample to include a greater number of beginning principals, in order to determine whether the findings here are consistent with the experiences of a larger group. This type of study might employ focus groups, or it might be quantitative in nature.

Another recommendation for future research would be to focus a study on the mentoring experiences of beginning principals who work in urban areas, with larger populations of at-risk students, in order to determine whether their experiences in mentoring relationships are similar to those of the participants studied here.

Another recommendation for further research is to conduct interviews with mentors, in order to determine whether their opinions of the program in New Jersey are consistent with the views offered by the protégés included in this study. It would be especially enlightening to know their views on how the six contextual factors for mentoring relationships might affect their performance as mentors.
Finally, Stanford University's Educational Leadership Institute has identified 8 states that they consider to be exemplars in the field of principal preparation. All 8 have mentoring programs. A recommendation for further research would be to carry this study over to 1 or more of these states in order to compare the experiences of principals in these programs to the experiences of the principals in the New Jersey program that are presented here.

Concluding Statement

The significance of making changes such as those mentioned above is that New Jersey is not included in the list of States that have been identified by Stanford University's Educational leadership Institute as exemplars in developing high caliber principal preparation programs (Cohen, Darling-Hammond, & LaPointe 2006; and Orr & Orphanos, 2007). In fact, if the relatively small sample of responses cited here are representative of the opinions of many other principals in New Jersey, then there is cause for concern that we may not be producing the most well prepared educational leaders. Some of the critical elements required in order to create the strongest possible mentoring program—the "whole tapestry"—have been enumerated above. This researcher believes that including the components that are currently missing can form a richer mentoring experience, and better school principals. In the Odyssey, when Athena feels the need to give counsel to Telemachus, she takes on the appearance of the trusted advisor Mentor, in order to convince the young man that the time has come for him to begin his own personal journey of discovery. She then promises to find the companions who will help him along the way. There is much potential for a valuable mentoring experience for principals in New Jersey, which would then lead to more thoroughly prepared school
leaders at a time when they are greatly needed. If the Department of Education makes
some important adjustments to its mentoring model, then these words would still hold the
same promise of success for new administrators today:

The journey that stirs you now is not far off. Not with the likes of me,
Your father’s friend and yours, but with those I will carefully select for you,
To rig you a swift ship and to be your shipmates too (L. II.318 – 320).
References


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Appendix A

Transcript of Interview with Participant A
Interview Transcript – Participant A: April 17, 2007

Interviewer: What do you recall of your expectations for working with a mentor, before you started the program?

Interview Participant A: My first impression was positive. I feel that talking to a veteran administrator is like opening up an encyclopedia, and since we learn from oral as much as we do from reading, and there’s not as much written about administration I looked forward to the opportunity. I’m also an alternate route teacher and I had a very positive experience going through the alternate route program, which was somewhat of an internship, so I was positive from the start.

Interviewer: Did your experience with your mentor meet your expectations? Why or why not?

Interview Participant A: I would say yes, my expectations have been met. Although . . . my mentor, he’s not going to hear this interview?

Interviewer: No.

Interview Participant A: Well, the sessions have gone extremely long. A typical session for us is three hours in length. The mentor will go on and on and on, beyond where I’m concentrating. And really starts to tell war stories that kind of go beyond what I think I need to hear. Having said that—every session has been rich. I’ve taken notes on every session. I have a very qualified mentor. And, I don’t know if this will go towards one of your other questions, but I really feel my true mentors this year, and last year, are my colleagues, the other principals that I’m working with, who I’m in touch with almost daily.

Interviewer: If you ever decide to become a mentor yourself, would you do more than your mentor, less than your mentor, or the same as your mentor?

Interview Participant A: I would do more shadowing. I would do more modeling. Anyway, I would have shadowing projects so that I could model for my mentee. I would spend less hours, and try and make them, you know, still as rich, still with the amount of material. I would do more with E-mail. I might do something with video or CD’s, DVD’s, where I could say, you know, here’s an example of, you know, a way I’ve seen an administrator handle it. Here’s a DVD of me holding whatever. And I think that that’s something we need to do in our profession, is provide more DVD examples of sound teaching and sound administrators.

Interviewer: Would you have preferred that your work with your mentor encompassed more or less than the eight explorations and the research project? Explain
Interviewer: What is your research project?

Interview Participant A: I’m looking at Language Arts and Reading instruction in third grade, in “I” and “J” districts, in Morris and Union County, and I’m trying to find in fourteen categories, trying to find consistencies, or you know, similarities in schools. Again, just trying to identify best practices. Making sure we’re doing what’s best for our kids. And, at the same time, as a person with music experience, learning a little bit more about teaching Language Arts.

Interviewer: And what about the eight explorations? Are they adequate? Too much? Too little?

Interview Participant A: What eight explorations?

Interviewer: Don’t you have to be doing an exploration at eight different meetings, where you have to explore different topics? Right?

Interview Participant A: Yeah, we’ve done that. We’ve gone through all the protocols of his reviews of me, and we’ve discussed those extensively. Yeah, I guess we’ve gone through all the documents. I guess that we did that early on.

Interviewer: Is that what you meant when you were saying about his maybe going on for longer than he needed to?

Interview Participant A: No, he talks about baseball. He talks about . . . he’s retired now and I think he’s used to a 12 to 14 hour day as a superintendent of schools, and now he’s retired.

Interviewer: How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

Interview Participant A: Most of what my mentor has taught me about comes from the perspective of a superintendent. And, while I think that’s a possible career direction for me, ten years down the road, I’ve really enjoyed that perspective, and having a one-on-one connection with a former superintendent. I think, you know, in terms of the day-to-day, some of the nitty-gritty, I’ve relied much more on my informal mentors.

Interviewer: For a principal’s perspective?
Interview Participant A: A principal’s perspective, and district perspective, I’ve relied much more heavily on last year [names a past supervisor], and this year the two other elementary principals and the one junior high school principal, it’s a very close-knit group. I think if I was in a district where we didn’t have a close-knit group of administrators and a wonderful superintendent to call, someone who had been a former elementary principal, I think I might reach out to my mentor more.

Interviewer: What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for you professionally?

Interview Participant A: I think he’s been most helpful with the research project because he teaches a course, a college course, in action research. So he’s been very helpful with that very demanding aspect of this program. Beyond that he’s been very helpful with crises—when we had an intruder on our campus he was helpful giving me information at that time. For extreme cases of health issues, building safety issues—he’s helped me with the extreme cases.

Interviewer: What aspect of your work with your mentor did you find to be least useful to you professionally?

Interview Participant A: The worst aspect for me has been when we get together with our mentor/mentee, peer group. We’ve been reading articles together, and reading short books together, and doing reports on chapters. And I have found that to be the least important. What I really value in those sessions is when we do a round table. And each principal talks about what, you know, each first or second year principal talks about what their challenges were that week or that month.

Interviewer: So could it be more useful to you if it was structured differently?

Interview Participant A: I think that the structure should be with our mentor/mentee, with our peer-leader groups, again it is more sharing of ideas, sharing of challenges, more E-mail networking with them. And I think there needs to be much more shadowing. I think that we would learn faster, and learn more by shadowing other principals. Veteran principals, first year principals, learn good things, bad things. And there’s been no shadowing what-so-ever.

Interviewer: What was the most helpful factor in establishing a working relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant A: I think the best—I knew my mentor beforehand. I had interviewed with him for a job. So I had met him [names mentor] formerly of [names district]. So I knew of him and we had mutual friends. And so we kind of met and talked about our mutual friends and had some laughs. But I think it was very helpful when he came to my school and observed me lead an assembly program and he also came and observed me lead a Halloween program. And I think that you know, he kind of saw
where I was coming from, and, you know, what was positive about my work, and what he could add. Again, it was more face-to-face.

Interviewer: What was the greatest hindrance to forming a productive relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant A: I think that the biggest challenge, or hindrance, is the lack of time that we have, given that we’re in a new position, and we’re, you know, again, working long hours. But we overcame through just meeting into the evening.

Interviewer: In what ways do you think that the change from a one-year program to a two-year program may have helped or hindered your professional development?

Interview Participant A: In my case it helped because I was a vice principal for one year in a district, and then in my second year I moved to an elementary principalship in another district. So it was helpful to have my mentor working with me, you know, in two years, in two jobs. That’s just my unique personal situation. I think, you know, obviously you develop a closer relationship over two years than you would in one year.

Interviewer: Would any type of relationship-building activity have helped you and your mentor to have established a more productive relationship? Specify.

Interview Participant A: No.

Interviewer: If your mentor had been of the opposite gender, how would this factor affect your relationship?

Interview Participant A: It wouldn’t make any difference at all for me, and, in fact, my true mentor last year was my principal, who was female [names previous supervisor], and my realistic mentors now are both male and female.

Interviewer: If given the option, would you have preferred to select your own mentor?

Interview Participant A: Yes, definitely. Yes, I would have chosen someone who was, you know, doing what I’m doing, you know, building-level principal or building-level vice principal, rather than a superintendent, or a retired superintendent. And I think that geographical location would have been helpful. I think that if it was a mentor in my district, because I was in such, you know, two quality districts, with quality mentors there I think that there would have been someone in-house who would have been wonderful.

Interviewer: Did the fact that you did not get any choice in the selection of your mentor affect your subsequent relationship with that mentor in any way? Specify.

Interview Participant A: No, I don’t think it was negative that I — I still think that I have a mentor who has been very helpful and committed and organized. You know, in my case it worked out well.
Interviewer: If given the option of selecting your own mentor, would you have chosen a person with whom you had a prior professional relationship, or would you have chosen someone with whom you had no prior professional relationship? Explain why.

Interview Participant A: I would have chosen someone who either I knew and worked with, and had respect for, or someone that I had heard about through a colleague to say yeah, this is someone you want to be like, this is someone you want to mentor (sic), this is, you know, a great leader, great educational leader, lead teacher, whatever you want to call the person, and this is somebody you want to model.

Interviewer: So you don’t feel that you would have needed to actually know them personally, ahead of time?

Interview Participant A: In my case, there were people that I knew that I would have liked to mentor (sic), that I would have liked to have that relationship with. But I don’t think in every case you would have to know—you know, it’s not a black and white decision. I don’t think in every case you’d have to know that person. It’s not a black and white.

Interviewer: In what ways did the fact that your mentor came from outside of your district make a difference in your relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant A: The very positive side is that I felt very free to ask any kind of question what-so-ever, because my tenure wasn’t at stake, and I knew that nothing would get back to my superintendent or my colleagues. So it made it very safe. The fact that he lives an hour away added to that safety.

Interviewer: In what ways did it help you professionally to have a mentor’s input on each of the State’s required activities?

Interview Participant A: Yes, definitely, absolutely. My mentor is a stickler for details. He is more committed to this program than I am, has been very good at meeting timelines, meeting deadlines, doing his evaluations for me and of me, so he has kept me on target, absolutely. Where I’ll be consumed with work, and students and parents he has kept me on track. So he has been good that way.

Interviewer: How frequently do you expect to maintain contact with your mentor after the two-year program is officially ended?

Interview Participant A: I don’t know. Since he is retired I don’t know if he’s going to move out of the area. I would think we might stay in touch by E-mail. But because he lives far away, and he’s retired, I don’t think that we’ll have regular contact.

Interviewer: Do you think that he’s a person that you would reach out to for guidance or advice after the program is over?
Interview Participant A: Yes, I would reach out to him for advice, absolutely. I respect him, and his knowledge over more than two decades as an administrator is worth a lot to me. So, I would definitely reach out to him.

Interviewer: Do you think that your mentor derived any professional benefit through his or her participation in this program? Explain

Interview Participant A: I don’t think he’s—I think he’s looking forward to the data that I’m going to get from my research project. Honestly, I think he’s excited about that. And, I’m hoping to get some research back from the [names a local district] schools. And he’s excited about administration. He’s excited about education. For him as a retired person it’s kept him involved, and I think that’s been positive for him. I don’t think he’s learned any new information. He’s recently retired, so you know, he hasn’t been out of it for a while. He’s not learning about technology.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you personally did anything to assist your mentor in his or her professional development?

Interview Participant A: No, I don’t think so. But I think that after my research project is done it may help him, and it may help him in his university teaching.

Interviewer: Describe how your mentor did or did not respect your privacy and need for confidentiality.

Interview Participant A: He absolutely respected my confidentiality. While he’s friends with my superintendent, I don’t think he would ever pick up the phone and call him. I have asked him questions about teachers that he knew in his district, and who are now in my district and I know that he would never, you know, cross the line in any way, shape or form. He’s completely trustworthy.

Interviewer: In what ways was your mentor able to assist you with any non-school related issues?

Interview Participant A: He’s helped me with time management questions and organizational skills which certainly spill over into my family life. He has helped me with some career trajectory concepts with regard to the superintendancy, which will have an effect on my life. He was—I would term him as a workaholic, and he’s told me stories about sleeping in his office, you know, going into work at 2:00 am, and so I don’t think he’s quite one to go to with helping balance, you know, work and family, even though he had children—has children.

Interviewer: What recommendations, if any, do you have for improving the mentoring component of the State’s licensure process?
Interview Participant A: As I've said before, I really think that there needs to be more shadowing projects. As I've said before I think that the round table meetings—the peer group meetings need to be more about sharing stories and ideas and strategies so it's more of a... oh what's the name of the course? Case study. So it's more of a case study course. I don't think that, you know, reading books and reading chapters and reporting on them is effective. I think that the research project is too lengthy, too extensive. And it also is frustrating to me that the State does, you know, while they have these parameters, rules and regulations, doesn't seem to really follow through in any way, shape or form to check your work once it's done. It's kind of your mentor's word. They sign off the sheet, but there's no follow up or guidance by the state. I don't think that there's—I think that there's a huge lack of funding for this program by the State. So they really don't have the personnel to help you beyond the mentorship. I also feel, you know, as the father of three, that it was difficult for me to pay the over three thousand dollars out of pocket, without the District helping out. Well [names one district] didn't help out, but [names another district] did. So my year one I paid for, and year two my new district paid for. So that was a challenge. Even as principals we're not making a lot of money in this area of the country, as you know.

Interviewer: Yes. Thank you. That concludes the interview.
Appendix B

Transcript of Interview with Participant B
Interview Transcript – Participant B: Date: May 3, 2007

Interviewer: What do you recall of your expectations for working with a mentor, before you started the program?

Interview Participant B: I think that what I expected was that I would have dialogue with the person, and that I would be able to count on them whenever I needed help. Like if there was a situation in school, and I wasn’t sure how to handle it, that I’d be able to call that person and ask them, or even if something was going on between two teachers, and I was like, OK, how do I handle this type of thing? So, more of someone I could go to with questions as to how to do things, whether it was with management or if it was situational issues that I was concerned about how to handle properly. So that’s really what I expected from my mentor, working with my mentor.

Interviewer: What school did you attend for your administrative coursework?

Interview Participant B: (Names a school in New Jersey).

Interviewer: OK, and so did they tell you that that was what the mentoring program was going to look like?

Interview Participant B: They never discussed the mentoring program at all. And when I finished my prep work it was back in 1997. So it’s changed since then.

Interviewer: Did your experience with your mentor meet your expectations? Why or why not?

Interview Participant B: It did. I feel that my mentor is well organized. He’s very accessible, and anytime I need anything I can call him, and he gets back to me. If I leave him a message he’s always on top of calling me back. He’s never made me feel, like, don’t bother me with this. He has been there 110%. So he’s met my expectations, as far as what I wanted from a mentor, he’s met those.

Interviewer: If you ever decide to become a mentor yourself, would you do more than your mentor, less than your mentor, or the same as your mentor?

Interview Participant B: That’s a tough question because I think my mentor has done a lot, and I like what he’s done. I think he’s done everything that he was supposed to do as a mentor, based on the State’s requirements. I personally feel it’s too much, as to what they wanted. So that’s a tricky question because... not that I would do less. I think I would require less of my mentees. But that’s if I could do that without the State penalizing them. So it’s a tricky situation. As far as what he’s done for me, I would do the same. I think he’s done... so if I can answer it in that regard I think I would do the same as what he’s done. If I could make the mentee do less, I would do that. Maybe that will come up later.
Interviewer: Would you have preferred that your work with your mentor encompassed more or less than the eight explorations and the research project? Explain

Interview Participant B: Yeah, I think I would have wanted it to be less. I feel that as a new person getting into this profession... not profession, because I'm in the profession. But into this part of the profession being an administrator, and being in a new district. I think it's different if you go from one district where you were teaching and then you just move into administration, where you have a background as to how the district runs. It may be a little bit easier to meet all the expectations that they want you to meet. I didn't teach in that building before going into administration. So I'm in there learning a new staff; learning new rules and regulations and guidelines, and the way things are done. Their union is very strong, so trying to learn all of that, and then trying to learn what I'm supposed to do as an administrator. So I felt that what the State... I think they had good intentions. They felt that everything that we were supposed to do was already embedded in our profession and in our job. It doesn't turn out that way because you have to document, document, document. And then with this action research project, I would be doing what I'm doing for my action research project, but to have to write it up and to present it, it is a lot. And I feel that if they want administrators to be successful, they would not require all of this. I feel like I'm doing a mini-thesis again. And I would hope that the State would want us to be focusing on our job, and learning what we should do to become a strong administrator, rather than doing all this paperwork.

Interviewer: What is the topic of your action research project?

Interview Participant B: I am implementing guided reading through... I'm focusing on second grade because second grade is the only grade that doesn't have two factors going on this year. Last year second grade started with the guided reading. This year I have all my grades doing guided reading. But, I put an additional basic skills teacher to work in there to pick up a group four times... we moved to a six-day cycle. So four times out of the six days the classroom teacher has an additional teacher in there for half an hour to work with students during guided reading. So my action research project is based on the fact that I have the additional teacher in the room to see if, in fact, the test scores improve.

Interviewer: And did your superintendent suggest any part of that?

Interview Participant B: No, because when I did this she was still the principal at [names another school in the same district]. And, unfortunately, at [names other school] they don't have the staffing to do that. I was able to do it because I'm in a smaller school, and I was able to play around with the schedule. And I said, well why do I have to pull them out? Let me put them in and see what happens. And I want to see... I know that one year won't... and that's why I said that I'd be doing this anyway, because I'm going to continue to monitor over the next several years to see if it really is going to make an impact. And not that test scores mean everything. But right now our reading scores are not where they are (sic), and the kids are not reading at the level where they should be reading. So I'm curious to see if it's going to help.
Interviewer: How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

Interview Participant B: Umm. I’d definitely say that my experiences with my mentor in particular was a positive experience (sic). I don’t... I’m sure you’re familiar with the fact that we have to meet with a peer group?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interview Participant B: It’s quite interesting because the other mentors... you can see the differences in how they are, and what they expect from their mentees. I have to say that my mentor really is following everything by the book. Whatever is required by the State, he’s following. Part of it is because he’s very conscientious, and that’s just the kind of educator he is. And part of it is because we’re the first cohort, and I think he doesn’t want anyone to come back and say well, we didn’t do this. And we don’t know what the State is going to require as proof, in a sense. But I feel that he didn’t do this just to make extra money. I feel that he truly did this because he wants to help other professionals. So my relationship and my experiences with him have been very positive.

Interviewer: Have people in your peer group had less positive experiences?

Interview Participant B: I wouldn’t say they’ve had less. What I can say is I feel it’s been very casual. I feel that they’ve been able to... some of their action research projects were quite thin, and it’s because their mentor said, “just do something quick, and get it done with.” And, see, that’s the kind of person I am too. I can’t do it just to do it. It’s got to be presentable. I won’t just say... and plus, I’m doing a lot of research for my own purposes and not just for this project. So I think it’s been very positive for my professional development. And he’s been wonderful with the action research project. I mean I have sent him things constantly, asking what do think? How do you think I should word this? Should I go this route? Should I leave this alone? And he’s been great as far as setting up the parameters for my action research project. So I think the other people... I wouldn’t say less. I think they actually like the fact that their mentors are just kind of leaving them alone, which I find interesting. And I think that’s a flaw in the State’s requirements. I don’t know how they would better monitor that. But I think they should assure that the mentors are doing the same thing, and requiring the same things. I don’t know how that’s going to work. I hope I answered your question.

Interviewer: Yes, you did. What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for you professionally?

Interview Participant B: Again, I think the fact that since I had to do this research project, I think that was probably the most productive part because he has a lot of insight as to how to put these together. So that part, I think he’s really helped me with the most. I think I’m in a unique situation because I do have a principal in my building that I can go to at any time to ask questions. Other people don’t have that, so I think if we didn’t have
this program I think I would have been OK because I had someone right there to help me out.

Interviewer: So, you mean that is due to being a VP, as opposed to being a lone principal, with no other administrative peer to turn to?

Interview Participant B: Yes. So I think that’s why I wouldn’t say calling him, with a “how do I handle this?” would be the most productive; although he’s been great with that. But I didn’t need him for that. What I really needed him for was to put this action research project together.

Interviewer: And you got that.

Interview Participant B: And I got that from him. So I’d say that would probably be the most productive aspect of the relationship I had with him.

Interviewer: What aspect of your work with your mentor did you find to be least useful to you professionally?

Interview Participant B: Umm. I don’t really think I had anything I could say was the least. I mean I think he was strong. I mean, I think I was fortunate in that regard that he was very strong. I have to say he was the leader of our peer group. If he didn’t show up then people were looking around and no one knew what we should be doing. He used to . . . I shouldn’t say used to, he still does, but he wasn’t at our last meeting, so he put me in charge of it. But he would come to our meetings with an agenda, and something for us to do because he felt, well, we’re here, we need to make it productive. The meetings were always an hour long, but he always made sure it was a productive hour. I don’t really have anything negative to say.

Interviewer: OK, that’s fine. What was the most helpful factor in establishing a working relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant B: Well, I think what was very helpful was when I did my application . . . the District did that . . . and then what happened was, within a day, he called me to tell me that he was my mentor, and he explained where he had been for the last several years as an administrator, and that the door was always open to call him and to work with him at any time. And I think because he made himself so available, right from the get-go, I felt very comfortable with him, and knew, right off the bat, that I’d have a great working relationship with him. And then, of course, the first time I actually met with him, he sat down right away, “how are things going?” “What do you need help with?” “Is there a problem going on at your school that you need another idea how to solve?” And I think that because he was so open, and really tried to get information from me it made me feel comfortable, and I just knew right away I could trust him with anything I had to talk to him about.
Interviewer: Is your mentor currently an acting administrator somewhere? He’s not retired?

Interview Participant B: No, he’s not retired.

Interviewer: What was the greatest hindrance to forming a productive relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant B: You know there really wasn’t one.

Interviewer: OK. In what ways do you think that the change from a one-year program to a two-year program may have helped or hindered your professional development?

Interview Participant B: Well, I think it’s almost hard to say. I know that under the one-year program your mentor could have been in-house, and then I don’t know if you would have really gotten as much help or different ideas just because they were in-district, you worked with them anyhow. So I don’t know if I would say that the fact that it was one year or two years really. I might say it was more that it was someone out-of-district. But I’ll get to that later, and I’ll try to answer your question. I think a two-year program helped, knowing that I had somebody to go to for the two years if I needed them. But the work we had to do for it I think hindered my professional development. I’m not giving you a straight answer here. But I’m trying to tell you exactly how I feel. I think the two-year span is fine. I think it’s good. I really do, especially for someone who is in a situation where they are the only administrator in the building, and they may not have somebody. Or they may not trust somebody in the District to go to. I think it’s nice to have that outside person, and to have them for two years while they’re still trying to figure things out, I think it’s a fabulous idea. But, again, I think they have to revamp the program so that the mentee actually feels like it could be productive.

Interviewer: Would any type of relationship-building activity have helped you and your mentor to have established a more productive relationship? Specify.

Interview Participant B: No, I think that just based on his personality and my personality . . . and he’s got two other mentees, and we all work very well together. So I don’t think we needed anything like that.

Interviewer: If your mentor was of the opposite gender, how did this factor affect your relationship?

Interview Participant B: No. Obviously he’s a male . . . no, it’s been fine.

Interviewer: If given the option, would you have preferred to select your own mentor?

Interview Participant B: I think in the beginning, before I met him, I would have said, well why can’t I just get somebody in-house and just be done with it? But now that I have him, I’m very happy that I have him because I feel like I’ve formed a bond with
him. And I know that even though my mentoring “ends” this summer, I will still be in contact with him, and I’ll still work with him because I’ve formed a nice relationship with him in that regard, and I know that he’s not going to say to me, “mentoring is over, goodbye, don’t call me ever again.” So in the long run I’m glad I didn’t select my own mentor. But that’s because I have a good relationship with him.

Interviewer: Did the fact that you did not get any choice in the selection of your mentor affect your subsequent relationship with that mentor in any way? Specify.

Interview Participant B: No.

Interviewer: If given the option of selecting your own mentor, would you have chosen a person with whom you had a prior professional relationship, or would you have chosen someone with whom you had no prior professional relationship? Explain why.

Interview Participant B: I think that’s tough too. I think if you pick somebody you know, you’re comfortable with that person, but you may have a tendency of being a little lazy as far as the requirements in a sense. But I think if you picked . . . I feel very fortunate that I didn’t have a choice, and it worked out well. I felt that my mentor was there for me, and did everything that I felt he could have done to help me; and has always assisted me. But, I don’t feel everybody else was that fortunate. So, with that being said, I could say I probably would have picked somebody I knew just because I would have been able to pick someone that I felt I could truly go to. Where, right now it’s a lottery. Some people got lucky, and some people didn’t. So I’d say if I had to pick somebody, if I was given that option and they told me, “Alright, we’re going to let you pick.” I probably would have picked someone I knew.

Interviewer: In what ways did the fact that your mentor came from outside of your district make a difference in your relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant B: I think what it did for me was it allowed me to be extremely honest in my thinking, because I knew that it would in no way impact me as far as in-house. If I had any questions about something or someone I was able to speak freely—I didn’t have to give any names. He really had no idea of who I was talking about. So I think that helped my relationship because I was able to truly go to him with concerns, and not feel like it was going to effect me professionally. In the same breath, I did kind of make sure I was careful with certain things. You never know—networking. And I would never want to say anything that would hurt anybody or anything of that nature either. But I’ve been fortunate. I haven’t had to call him and say, listen I’m having problems with this, that or the other thing. Or even when we would meet as a group and discuss certain things I was very careful to choose which issue I would talk about. But, again, I knew I could trust him, and I liked the fact that he was out-of-district, because another thing I thought was interesting was that . . . like last year I was playing around with scheduling for example, you know, and certain people, when they’ve done it over and over and over again, in the same building, with the same parameters, it’s almost like they hit a road block. Like, this is it, you can’t do anything else with this. You go to somebody else,
who's in a completely different system, they might be creative in a different way that you never thought of. And so it was nice. I went to him and asked him certain things, to get some feedback from him, and based on some of his feedback, and some of my own creative thinking, I’m switching the schedule completely around for next year. But it was nice. I was able to get information that way. Where, like [names her principal] would say, “No, this is the best we can do with the schedule.” So you have to think outside of the box.

Interviewer: So he helped you to take a fresh look at things?

Interview Participant B: Yes. And I think that helped too. And actually, I’m out-of-district too.

Interviewer: Hopefully that won’t make [subject B’s principal] too crazy.

Interview Participant B: No. And you know she appreciates it. One of the things she said that she loved when she interviewed me was that when she talked about scheduling, she said that, “your eyes lit up like you were in love.” It’s crazy, I know, because scheduling is a nightmare. But, it’s actually a challenge for me, and I enjoy the challenge. And actually, tomorrow, I’m meeting with [names a principal in another school] to deal with scheduling issues for next year. But, it’s something that I really enjoy. So, she said, “I was sold when you told me you liked scheduling.” So she doesn’t mind. She said, “as long as you’re doing it, it’s on you. Go ahead.”

Interviewer: In what ways did it help you professionally to have a mentor’s input on each of the State’s required activities?

Interview Participant B: I found that it was extremely helpful to have his input because. . . it was funny. You know, they have that log they want you to fill out. That alone stressed me, when I looked at that log. And, just to give you a little bit of background, when I took the job, a month later after signing I found out I was pregnant. OK, so here I am starting a brand new position, I have to tell my new boss that I’m pregnant, and then I find out all the requirements I have to do with this mentoring. So I’m panicking, because I’m thinking how am I going to do all this? Plus, I’m part time. OK? Last year I was 60 percent. This year I’m 70 percent. So, I was going, oh my goodness. So, when I looked at that log, and I’m reading through it, there was a part of me that said, if I knew I was going to have to do all this I might not have taken it. It was just too crazy a time in my life. Plus, beside my baby, I have two younger kids. One is starting at [names a school] next year. And then I have a three-year-old. So it was just like, what am I doing? You know? So I was nervous with that. So I called him right away, and said, you know, I’m not sure how to handle all this, and I’m not sure what I really need to do. And, basically, what I thought was wonderful was he said, “You know what? You don’t have to sit here and write out all the log information. If you have documentation to prove that you’re meeting those requirements, the eight standards, then throw them in a binder, right behind the log page, and be done with it.” He said, “If you want to write a couple of notes you can do that, but in all honesty, if you have documentation then there’s no reason to write
everything out.” That took a load off of my shoulders completely, because I felt like, OK, that I can do. Because if I have stuff, instead of having to write it all out, I can just prove I did it then, that’s fine. So I just organized a very nice binder, and I broke up the log, and I did that. So, that alone helped me. And then, again, with my action research project this year, he gave us books that would help us, as references. He researched . . . .

Interviewer: Do you happen to remember any of them?

Interview Participant B: The titles? You know what? I don’t because he gave us a bunch and we rotated them. I can get them to you. But one of them actually said how to write an action research project. It was through ASCD, and I don’t remember the name of the book. But anyhow, he did go online, and then he put together folders for us with more information related to writing an action research project. So, he tried to lighten up our load in that regard, and give us whatever information he thought would help us, and to ease our minds a little bit. And then what was great was that as I was writing certain parts of the project I would e-mail to him and say, “Well, what do you think?” and he would give me feedback. So, he’s helped a lot. He’s been wonderful with the State requirements. Whatever he felt was going to be OK with the State, but also, to make us feel like, OK I can breathe. It’s manageable. I’m being mentored along with somebody you know . . . from your district. And another one of the new principals [from the Interviewer’s district] at the elementary level is in a different group [cohort]. But he’s in my peer group. OK, but he has a different mentor. So, it’s kind of interesting because his mentor is very lax as far as requirements. And he did none of that for him. So it’s kind of interesting to hear . . . because we would talk before the mentors would show up. And, to hear the different things . . . But, anyway, my mentor’s been wonderful with helping me.

Interviewer: How frequently do you expect to maintain contact with your mentor after the two-year program is officially ended?

Interview Participant B: I would say that we will probably . . . . we usually e-mail each other, and then only speak on the phone if there’s a major issue going on, where I might really need help, and I’ll say, “Listen, we really need to talk, rather then e-mail.” But, we’ll continue communication, probably through e-mail, maybe once a month. I’ll check in, but I don’t want to burden him either. But knowing him, he’ll be contacting me. He’ll probably contact me before I contact him, because he’s like the fatherly figure, “How’s everything going?” Making sure my kids are OK, that sort of thing. So, you know, he’s wonderful.

Interviewer: Do you think that your mentor derived any professional benefit through his or her participation in this program? Explain

Interview Participant B: I would say he did, because when we meet as a peer group we have probably about six mentors there, and each one of them has from one to three mentees. OK? So it’s a large group. And a lot of times we’ll have a session where we discuss any new things that are going on in our districts or any new issues in education, period, that might be going on. And we’ll just have dialogue, you know? I think
everybody there has benefited from that because you’re hearing how one person is looking at it, compared to another person. Because, even when they [the State Legislature] looked at the benefits, or how they [the State Legislature] are looking at going to a “Super Super” [regional superintendent]. Things like that, where we’re discussing State-wide issues, or even, you know, county issues. And then district-wide, you’ll hear, well this is going on, and it’s interesting because they’ll say, “Oh, so this is how you handled it? Because this is how I would have handled it” type of things, because similar situations have occurred between different buildings and different school districts. I think it’s funny, because, like I said, he took the leadership role, in a sense, over everybody. And so I think he’s benefited from that because I think, for him, he felt like he had to do something, so it almost made him go out and make sure he had something to present, whether it was an article, or whatever it was, something that was a hot topic in education. So that professional development alone, on his part, to share with us, I think you learn. The other thing I feel was beneficial, even though the action research project was a lot . . . so far two people have presented. And I feel that with that, the mentors—not the mentees, because we just let them do their thing and we’re done—but the mentors ask a lot of questions. And a lot of it is because they’re curious and they want to know well, how is this working? And they might want to implement it in their own district, I don’t know. So, that could be a reason why they’re doing that. So, again, I think they’ve gotten something from it.

Interviewer: Did your mentor ever say to you anything about why he chose to enter this program or be a mentor?

Interview Participant B: No, he never said anything about why he wanted to do it. But, obviously, if I had to guess, based on how he is, I can tell he just wants to be out there and help whoever he can. But no, he never actually mentioned why he wanted to.

Interviewer: Did he ever say anything about how long he’s been practicing as an administrator?

Interview Participant B: Yes, I don’t want to get the number wrong, I’ll give you an estimate, because I know that he was a principal . . . I want to say for about 16 or 17 years. And now he is a director of curriculum, and he’s been in that position for three years. So for about 20 years he’s been an administrator.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you personally did anything to assist your mentor in his or her professional development?

Interview Participant B: I don’t want to say I’d take credit for assisting in his professional development. But, I know that just based on my action research project, and him (sic) and I have had conversations as to the program and why . . . and with him being a director of curriculum, it was nice for him to hear my side as well. So, I think I opened his eyes to some things that maybe he wasn’t aware of. Or, he has music as a background, so it wasn’t like he was an elementary teacher, and so I think I was able to share some of my
insight, and some of the research I did, and learned about. So I would say he probably got something from there.

Interviewer: Describe how your mentor did or did not respect your privacy and need for confidentiality.

Interview Participant B: He absolutely respected my privacy. And he never shared anything that he shouldn’t have. And, as a matter of fact, he interviewed for a position in my current district, and shared with the Board, because he felt that he needed to tell them, and he told me ahead of time, that he was going to tell them that he was my mentor. And he didn’t discuss anything about my action research project. Although he said that they would probably find it interesting when I was done. And he shared that with me ahead of time, that he was going to do that, to make sure that I was comfortable. He said, “I don’t want to go in there, and if they ask me I want to tell them the truth. And I said that was fine. But they have to know that I have nothing to do with whether you get the position. So, he respected it.

Interviewer: In what ways was your mentor able to assist you with any non-school related issues?

Interview Participant B: I don’t really think there have been any non-school-related issues that have I’ve discussed with him. I don’t think there’s been anything.

Interviewer: What recommendations, if any, do you have for improving the mentoring component of the State’s licensure process?

Interview Participant B: Well, there’s a few things. I think I’ve already touched upon the action research project. I don’t know if I would call it an action research project. I think they could make it, if they wanted you to do something that was embedded, they could make it something that was not so involved. Because I feel it’s really like a mini thesis that we’re writing here. What I understand—and this is my mentor’s understanding as well—that if he chose to say that I wasn’t ready to get my permanent license, then that’s what the State would go on. I don’t agree with that at all because he’s not seeing me on a daily basis, in my job. And I think that the State needs to take into consideration that there are people who are supervising me in a sense, and looking at what I do, and how I impact learning and what’s going on in the district. And I think that they should look at those things, even the evaluations that are written on me. If there was ever a question, I mean I know he’s not going to . . . . You know.

Interviewer: But if there was ever a problem, where you thought he was going to do something to sabotage your career, he could.

Interview Participant B: He absolutely could, and I don’t think that’s right. You know, I don’t think that somebody that’s outside of your district, that meets with you on a monthly basis, or on a bi-monthly basis, and you talk to or e-mail, or so on and so forth, will decide your fate, in a sense. I have a problem with that because what if they felt you
were too needy? Like, well this person calls me for too many things, or asks questions about too many things. And, again, I don’t know what my situation would have been if I was the lone administrator. What if I felt that I needed to call him more often? I don’t know. So I feel that is something they need to look at, as far as how they’re going to decide. And, again, I think the requirements are too detailed, as far as what they expect of you as a mentee. I think they need to look at that again. And the action research project absolutely is... I mean right now—prior to coming here—I was just talking about how thankfully I have some time before I have to finish writing mine and presenting mine because I did it on the second grade test scores, which we just finished taking yesterday. So I know I’m not going to have those results in for a while.

Interviewer: Does [your district] still do the Terra Nova in second grade?

Interview Participant B: No, they now do the NJ-PASS, which is similar to the NJ-ASK. But they don’t have the writing prompts. But it is more open-ended, and looks similar to the ASK. But I just feel that it’s too much, and I’m trying to... you know what it’s like at the end of a school year. I mean, here I am... and you’re a lone administrator... But here I am trying to finish up some scheduling, and trying to finish my evaluations, and you know, it would be nice if I could occasionally pop into a classroom and see what’s going on. So, I’m trying to finish up with this, and parents are coming in with this, that and the other thing, and all the shows, and all the things that are going off at the end of the year—like when I leave you now, I have to go back to school for a Geography Bee. So I’m constantly running around, and I’m thinking, OK, I’m going to have time to do this. And I’m trying to find time. And I did all along throughout the school year, I started doing the Abstract, and the background and the research, and I’m not finished putting my research into my paper the way I want to do it, and I haven’t compiled all of the information I need to show last year’s test results, so that when these results come in I was hoping I could just plop in those results, and then do my conclusion. But I’m nowhere near there. So that takes a lot, and honestly, right now it’s just eating away at me, because I feel like I have to get this done, I have to get this done, and I don’t have the time to get it done. So I think they need to look into that. I think that if they want administrators to be successful, I think they have to realize that what they’re asking of us is just a little too much. And I also feel that if they want to attract people to the administrative profession they need to... I know of several people who said, “If you have to do all of that I’m not even going to bother.”

Interviewer: Really?

Interview Participant B: Yes, and they said forget it. I’ll just stay in the classroom, because at least I know what I’m doing, and it’s not requiring all this work. And it’s a profession that people are shying away from at this point, because it’s too much responsibility, not enough pay. You know, a lot of nonsense that comes along with it, and then the State is throwing this on you. And you know, I did my graduate work, it’s like, why am I doing it again? And that’s the feeling. And I have to tell you, a lot of the mentors, especially the one from [names a district], but one in particular, is so against the way this was set up, and very vocal about it. And, again, maybe I don’t feel as pressured
as some of them because I'm not the only administrator in the building, so my work load is divided. But I do, I constantly say to myself, if I was the only administrator in that building, and I had to do everything by myself, and do all of this on top of it, I would be spinning right now. They need to take that into consideration. Especially if they want younger administrators too, because younger administrators—if they want to attract them and keep them somewhere, and make them stay, and not say, forget this, I'm going to go do something else. Well, and a lot of them have young kids, like myself, and so to try to balance all that, it's a lot.

Interviewer: It is a lot. Previously you mentioned about having some sort of a standard so that the way in which mentors applied the requirements was standardized.

Interview Participant B: Yes, you're right. They do. I think that they need to do something. I think it's so broad the way that what is required is written right now, that different mentors, I think, are interpreting it differently. And I think certain mentors are feeling well, we know how the State of New Jersey works. They're not going to collect anything. Like with the one hundred hours. Everyone was in a panic thinking they were going to have to show all this documentation, and then they left it upon the districts to just say yes or no. And I think a lot of the mentors are feeling well that's what is going to be here. It's going to be, you know, we have to look at it, and make sure, and then we're done. We have to hand anything in. And that's why I feel certain mentors are saying, "You know what? Your action research project can just be simple, it can be simple, and just present it in a quick fashion, so that we can say you did it, and you're done, and move on." Which is very nice. And, believe me I'd appreciate that too. But in the same breath . . . .

Interviewer: But is that useful?

Interview Participant B: Well, yes, it is useful. But I also feel that my mentor, he wants it done the right way. And, you know, I think there's a part of him that feels that this is his job. To make sure he is following the State's requirements. So he's going to make sure we're doing it properly. And I don't have a problem with that at all. Because I feel like, well, what if they do come back for some crazy reason? It's done. I don't want to have to go back and figure out how to do this. And yes, I do think it will be helpful, especially because what I chose to do, I will continue to look into to see if it really . . . because one year is not going to tell you a true . . . it's not going to tell you a true standard to measure whether or not this is helpful.

Interviewer: Yes, and since you chose a very genuine project, it will do you a lot of good to keep following up.

Interview Participant B: Sure, and since we're in the very infancy stage of balanced literacy anyhow, anything I can do to try improve and support the program, improve the program and support the teachers, and do what you can, I'm going to keep doing anyway. So this was embedded. But certain people, I have to tell you, felt like they had to create
something, because there really wasn’t anything they wanted to work on at the time. And so they just created it because they had to.

Interviewer: Right, I’ve heard that from other people.

Interview Participant B: Yes, and that’s happened. So I know that their intentions are well (sic) and they want to make sure it’s all embedded... well, no, it’s not. So they have to take that into consideration too. And that’s what I’m saying. If they maybe, made it less detailed, and made it so it didn’t have to be quote, unquote, an action research project. How about, here’s an area in your district that you feel is lacking. Describe it, and maybe give some ideas about what you think could work, maybe something you would like to implement some years down the road to try to fix it. I mean something simple like a two-page thing, and you could just discuss that with your group. That’s feasible, that’s something people can do. But this was... and I told you I haven’t even started putting in the rest of my research. And I’m already up to like slide 25 on my presentation.

Interviewer: Really?

Interview Participant B: Yes, because I did a lot of background. And it’s funny, because other people did like nine slides, and they were done. So I might have to see if I can... I mean, I don’t want to be there forever. But, again, I’m also doing it the way I’m supposed to be doing it.

Interviewer: Is there anything else at all on the topic of mentoring that you’d like to add?

Interview Participant B: I was going to say the peer mentoring groups, because you didn’t really touch on that. I feel that the peer mentoring groups are good. I like that... people are upset that we have to take time out of our day, and go meet. And that is hard. But, I personally like that we meet because it’s nice to hear what other districts are doing, it’s nice to hear you’re not the only person feeling crazy. And you also do get to bounce ideas off of other mentors, which is kind of nice too. So that part I like. And obviously I only know how my peer mentoring group has been run. But some of the other mentors said, “You know what would be really cool? If we sat down, and instead of just discussing things, or reading articles, or whatever, but do “In-box” and “Out-box” type activities, just to see how people would do.” And we haven’t gotten to that. We want to do it, but we haven’t gotten to it yet. But, I think that yes, it’s hard that you have to schedule it, and if it wasn’t necessarily a requirement, like you have x amount of hours to do. If they said, you know, like you have to do ten within the two years, that would be manageable, and I think it would be useful. But again, I think that is something that is a good part of the program. And I think they should keep that, but they should monitor it because now, certain people, they just resent it because it’s a lot of hours that we’re supposed to put in. that’s really about the only other thing I’d add—about the peer mentoring groups.

Interviewer: Alright. Thank you very much.
Appendix C

Transcript of Interview with Participant C
Interview Transcript – Participant C: May 7, 2007

Interviewer: What do you recall of your expectations for working with a mentor, before you started the program?

Interview Participant C: My expectations were to have somebody that I felt comfortable enough to not be afraid to ask a lot of questions to. You know, not feel that I was being judged by, possibly my inexperience. And somebody that I felt comfortable with, and who had the expertise and experience behind them to guide me in the right direction, with the kind of answers that would help me in my vice principalship. But I really wanted someone I could feel comfortable with, and that I could respect, and feel that they were knowledgeable enough to help me through my experience... through my internship.

Interviewer: Did your experience with your mentor meet your expectations? Why or why not?

Interview Participant C: Yes, they did. I think I was in a unique situation though. My mentor was a previous administrator of mine, so that I think helped, because I had the respect for him, working as a teacher for him. And I knew him. So that comfort level was there before I even started. And I respected him as somebody who had experience. I saw the way he ran a school, and felt that he did a really good job, so I felt that when I did need some help or guidance, that I could rely on him to guide me in the right direction.

Interviewer: How long had it been in between when you saw him as a teacher, and when he became your mentor?

Interview Participant C: Quite a few years. It had to be about ten years. But our paths have crossed socially beyond that.

Interviewer: So he knew that you were working towards your administrators’ license?

Interview Participant C: Right. And he went through the mentoring program to become a mentor and knew that I was going to be going through the program. And so we were able to be paired-up. And for me it was a good experience because we didn’t have to establish that mutual respect for each other, and comfort level, and trust, it was there before we started.

Interviewer: OK, that must have been very helpful.

Interview Participant C: It was.

Interviewer: If you ever decide to become a mentor yourself, would you do more than your mentor, less than your mentor, or the same as your mentor?
Interview Participant C: I would say probably about the same. Perhaps in certain areas maybe I would have done a little bit more. A little bit more hands-on with scheduling and budgeting kinds of questions. But, I would say, for the most part, just about the same.

Interviewer: Would you have preferred that your work with your mentor encompassed more or less than the eight explorations and the research project? Explain

Interview Participant C: Honestly, the explorations, I don’t know if I really felt that they helped me as much as actually working with my mentor. You know, that part of it . . . I just felt that it wasn’t as helpful. We did some of the explorations in our peer groups. But it was . . . the other things we did in the peer groups I felt were much more helpful. We had different speakers. We shared a lot of different experiences, and I received more out of that than going through the explorations. I just didn’t feel that was quite as helpful.

Interviewer: OK, and that sort of gets back to what you mentioned a minute ago. I think you wished there had been more with the budget. I know that isn’t really covered much. They do very little with finance in this program.

Interview Participant C: Right.

Interviewer: How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

Interview Participant C: I think it was a very positive experience. And, you know, I felt that the help he gave me, when there were questions or challenges in my job . . . that he was able to direct me. Not direct me, but give me options that I may not have thought about. So I found that working with him was productive. It gave me a little bit of insight. He would relate a challenge that I was having to something he had gone through, and how he had handled it, and so it gave me another perspective on a particular problem that I may have been dealing with.

Interviewer: Could you give me a specific example?

Interview Participant C: Yes, a Board of Education member’s wife was hired this year in our school. And she really was not doing a great job, and it was really a very sticky situation. I was dealing a lot with her one-on-one, and trying to mentor her, and trying to help her through the situation. And I wasn’t quite sure how to handle this. I spoke to my principal, and he was very supportive. He saw the same sort of things that I was seeing. So, in speaking to my mentor, we sort of went through the different scenarios. That . . . first of all, how we could help her through the year. And, if that didn’t work, you know, what would happen. It was a challenge.

Interviewer: What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for you professionally?
Interview Participant C: I think the peer-mentoring group. I think that was an excellent avenue to, first of all, to be speaking with other people who were going through the same things that you were. And also to network with other principals who were there. It gave you . . . you weren’t going through this alone. You were going through the same kinds of things, and you would share challenges and successes. And, so, to hear how other people dealt with them I thought was really helpful. It may not have been something that I came across yet, but it certainly is something that I could use in the future.

Interviewer: You could file it away for the future.

Interview Participant C: Yes.

Interviewer: What aspect of your work with your mentor did you find to be least useful to you professionally?

Interview Participant C: Again. I felt the explorations. It’s just that there was a lot of time that was spent on that initially, and I just didn’t feel it was helpful. When we had the peer-mentoring groups we would address some of those issues that were in the explorations, but we did it in a different way. It was more than just the paper and pencil aspect of it, and I know that this other Vice Principal I work with, he had it even worse than I did. I mean his mentor . . . both of us were in it for the very first time ever, and I didn’t have to do a whole lot of in-depth writing, for the explorations, but he did. I mean it was like a term paper for each one.

Interviewer: He had a different mentor than you?

Interview Participant C: Yes. So I don’t think the mentors were really that clear on what . . . on how this had to be approached. And I’m not exactly sure . . . as I said, I’m not sure that part of it, for me was as helpful as the actual getting together in groups, and having speakers, and addressing a different topic each month, and sharing ideas. To me that was much more productive and useful.

Interviewer: It’s interesting that I’ve heard this theme emerging from a few people now, about different mentors having different expectations, and they’re most definitely not the same.

Interview Participant C: Right.

Interviewer: And, also, what was the topic of your action research project?

Interview Participant C: We had fourteen new teachers hired this year in my school. And, in my district we do a one-day orientation for the new teachers, and that’s it. So I decided that they needed more. I went back to my own experience as a brand new teacher, where I came into the school and I was shown my mailbox that was just stacked to the top, and I was told your room number is this, and good luck, and that was it. There was nothing else that was given to me. And I was brand new, you know, a fresh out-of-college teacher at
that point. And you just feel so isolated. You know, I didn’t know anybody to ask questions of, and there wasn’t a whole lot of support. So I spoke to my principal, and I asked him if he felt that this was something that would be useful for our school and our district. And he totally agreed. He said he tried to do something a few years ago, and that it just sort of got lost. So I did a lot of research on new teacher induction programs, and came up with . . . I actually did the research last summer. Our district does an orientation for everybody, but our district is a K through eight district. So, what the elementary teachers were getting was not necessarily what our middle school teachers needed. So we did our own Back-To-School orientation before school started, and then we did a survey of the needs of the teachers. And then, from my own research also there were several different topics that would be useful for them to have a seminar, workshop or whatever you want to call it, and each month we did another workshop for them, and it’s been ongoing throughout the year. Where we meet once a month and talk about different issues that they’re going through. Similar to my peer mentoring group actually. I use that as a model. We talk about successes and challenges so that they know they’re not the only ones. And just try to, you know, just try to make an environment that was comfortable enough that if they had questions, that was OK. You’re a new teacher and you’re supposed to have questions. So that was my action plan.

Interviewer: What was the most helpful factor in establishing a working relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant C: Well, I think our previous relationship, you know, as I said, really helped us. Which I think is unique in this situation. I don’t think there are that many mentors who knew their mentees beforehand. But I think that was it for me.

Interviewer: What was the greatest hindrance to forming a productive relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant C: I don’t see there having been any hindrances.

Interviewer: In what ways do you think that the change from a one-year program to a two-year program may have helped or hindered your professional development?

Interview Participant C: I almost think that . . . I think one year would have been sufficient, maybe a year and a half. I think that for me, it almost went six months too long. Because what’s happening in my peer group is that there are new mentees that are coming in, because mentors are now winding down with one group, and they’re taking on other mentees, and so there’s been a bit of repetition in our peer mentoring group because they want to cover, or they want to go over the same kinds of things that they did with us initially. Sometimes timing is important, when you do it . . . you know, like budget kinds of things should be done in January. So there have been some overlaps in some of our meetings with some of the things we’re doing. They’ve tried to work it out by having two groups going at the same time. But it doesn’t always work. It depends on who attends, because not everyone can attend every meeting. If there aren’t enough to have two groups then we’re all together in the group. As I said, there’s been some repetition of speakers
that they had come in to speak to us that I've already heard. So, for me, I felt that what they're doing now . . . there's a lot of repetition.

Interviewer: Would any type of relationship-building activity have helped you and your mentor to have established a more productive relationship? Specify.

Interview Participant C: Again, you know, my situation was unique. We knew each other professionally before we became mentor and mentee, so . . .

Interviewer: OK, if you chose to become a mentor to someone else at some future point, do you think you would need to work on establishing some kind of connection before you got into the work?

Interview Participant C: Definitely, yes. As I said, I think that we work so well together, and we could get into it so much quicker, because I trusted him and I respected him, and, you know, I felt that he would guide me in the right direction, after having worked with him, and seeing the type of administrator that he was . . . I would like to emulate that. So, yes, I do think you need to have that kind of trust established in order to have a good relationship, and for it to be productive.

Interviewer: If your mentor was of the opposite gender, would this factor affect your relationship?

Interview Participant C: No, I don't think so.

Interviewer: If given the option, would you have preferred to select your own mentor?

Interview Participant C: No, again, for me, if I had a choice, I would have selected him.

Interviewer: Did the fact that you did not get any choice in the selection of your mentor affect your subsequent relationship with that mentor in any way? Specify.

Interview Participant C: No.

Interviewer: If given the option of selecting your own mentor, would you have chosen a person with whom you had a prior professional relationship, or would you have chosen someone with whom you had no prior professional relationship? Explain why.

Interview Participant C: Well, I think a prior professional relationship, assuming it was a good one, you know, I think that helps. I mean to have a stranger come in, and not know what type of administrator they were. There are so many different leadership styles, and how they interact with the staff . . . I would think it's important to have a prior relationship.

Interviewer: OK, but a number of the people in your peer group did not. They were just assigned somebody at random. Did any of them ever express any problem with that?
Interview Participant C: No they didn’t. But I think it took them a little longer though to get to the point where we started out. So, you know, there’s that relationship-building activity that you have to do beforehand. We were able to just get into it.

Interviewer: Did any of the people in your peer group ever talk about having conflicts with their mentors?

Interview Participant C: Not that I heard. And I’m trying to think if there is anybody who hasn’t continued in our group. And the only mentees that haven’t continued are those who possibly were not re-hired, and they sort of dropped out of the mentoring program for various reasons, because of their employment issues.

Interviewer: In what ways did the fact that your mentor came from outside of your district make a difference in your relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant C: Well, that’s interesting because he was from my district originally. So I think that also was a plus, because he was very aware of the culture, the politics, and so I think he understood what I was dealing with, because he himself dealt with the same types of situations.

Interviewer: OK, now imagine that your mentor had no familiarity with that district, do you think it would have made a difference?

Interview Participant C: I do, I do, I think, yes, I think districts are different. You know, the parents, the culture, the Boards, you know, dealing with the Boards, I think it’s different in different districts, from what I’ve heard from different mentees talking about their schools, and even the programs that we have. You know he was familiar with them, and the technology that we have, he knew where we were with that. So somebody coming in, I’ve been hearing about other Districts, and I realized that not everybody has what you have. So somebody coming in from the outside … technology especially. Someone did an action plan on implementing new technology, it was a technology action plan. And I was sitting there thinking, oh, my gosh, they’re just doing this? I mean we’ve been doing this for years. So, an administrator coming in from that district wouldn’t have that kind of knowledge base, that is what we do in my district with technology, and this is how we work. So I think the mentor, if they were not from the district, needs to really become familiar with how this district works a little bit, before they get started with their mentee. I think that there’s a lot to be said … the politics are very important. As I said, I was dealing with this teacher, basically, and, you know, had she not been who she was, uh, she wouldn’t be there.

Interviewer: Do you think then, that there’s a danger that the mentor could steer you in the wrong direction accidentally by not knowing enough about the district?

Interview Participant C: Yes. As I said, for me I felt that it was a plus that he was so knowledgeable about the programs and the staffing. You know, there were a lot of staff members who were there when he was a principal. So it did help. And, actually it’s
interesting, this particular teacher that I was having an issue with, was a parent in his school.

Interviewer: So he really did know her.

Interview Participant C: Exactly. So he was able to tell me things about her as a parent, that were very similar as a teacher. So, you know, without that insight, I would think, OK, is this something that she’s doing as a teacher? Is she reacting as a teacher this way? But this is just who she is, whether she’s in school or outside of school.

Interviewer: And he knew that.

Interviewer: In what ways did it help you professionally to have a mentor’s input on each of the State’s required activities?

Interview Participant C: Well, he was the expert. He had the experience, he had the knowledge. Any of the questions I may have, a lot of them he had already dealt with. Again, he wouldn’t give me the answers, but he would give me different scenarios, depending on how it worked within my school, and teachers that I was dealing with, you could do this, or possibly that, and try this, or try that. I just felt that his experience was certainly something that I relied on.

Interviewer: How frequently do you expect to maintain contact with your mentor after the two-year program is officially ended?

Interview Participant C: Oh, we’ll remain in contact, and I think he’ll be checking in. And I certainly will be looking to him for guidance. And, you know, he’s told me that I can call on him whenever, wherever. So I think it definitely will continue. He’ll be there if I need him.

Interviewer: Do you think that your mentor derived any professional benefit through his or her participation in this program? Explain

Interview Participant C: Definitely. I think it’s kept him current on a lot of what’s going on. Because there are new things that have been introduced since he’s retired, and . . . this mentoring program being one of them. So being involved in it, he’s certainly very knowledgeable about it. I think it has actually invigorated him a little bit. Because I think he missed not being . . . He’s very active in the retired principals’ association, so it’s not that he’s completely out of education. But, when this whole program started, and it was so brand new, and they started doing these peer mentoring workshops, each month that we would have (sic). He would go down to NJPSA (New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association Headquarters), and talk to them about what they were doing, and they seemed very impressed, and so they asked him to present to the new mentors how they were handling . . . you know, what they were doing. Because, I think there were a lot of mentors that weren’t exactly sure how to go about doing this. You know I think he
learned a lot, I think he felt that he was contributing to, you know, the welfare and well being of new administrators. So I think he enjoyed it as much as I did.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you personally did anything to assist your mentor in his or her professional development?

Interview Participant C: Personally? Well I guess that without me he wouldn't have had the opportunity to do this. But personally...

Interviewer: I mean did you personally show him some piece of research, or...

Interview Participant C: Yes. This new teacher induction program that I was working on, I was showing him all the research and the data. And, you know, he knew that it probably was a good idea to do (sic) but I don't know if he knew all of the data behind it. You know, how it influences the retention of teachers, and how it affects the students' achievement. So, yes, I think those kinds of things he became more aware of (sic).

Interviewer: Describe how your mentor did or did not respect your privacy and need for confidentiality.

Interview Participant C: He did, and I felt I could speak to him about anything and that it ended there. I felt I couldn't do that in my peer group... I could not tell them about this challenge... You know, we were talking about challenges, because it was just too close to home. I didn't know who knew who there. If somebody didn't know my Board... and they could start putting the pieces together... I felt I couldn't come out and talk about it in my peer mentoring group, but I could talk to him about it and know that nobody else would know about it, and yet he'd be able to help me out with that. So I definitely felt that he protected my privacy.

Interviewer: In what ways was your mentor able to assist you with any non-school related issues?

Interview Participant C: There really weren't any.

Interviewer: OK. What recommendations, if any, do you have for improving the mentoring component of the State's licensure process?

Interview Participant C: Well, again, I would not put as much emphasis on those explorations. I think the hands-on working with the mentor, the meetings; the peer mentoring groups were wonderful. I also think that, again, if there is, if there could be a pairing of two individuals who do have some kind of professional connection, I think for me that was a plus. I think if it is possible to do that... you know for them to put down what districts they work in, and then if there's a mentee in that district, to put them together. That probably would be the only thing I can think of right now.
Interviewer: OK. Is there anything at all about the mentoring experience that you had that you'd like to add. Is there anything I didn't remember to ask you, or any final thoughts about the experience?

Interview Participant C: Just that I felt it was a positive experience. You know, initially I was a little unnerved by two years . . . having to go through this for two years after going through everything. The cost was kind of expensive, although I was fortunate because my district did pay for it.

Interviewer: From what I've heard that is unusual.

Interview Participant C: Yes, but I didn't know that going into it. So, you know, I thought it was a lot of money to have to outlay (sic). But it really turned out to be a positive experience. As I said, maybe about six months too long, but it wasn't an overwhelming amount of work on my part. It was more a sharing of experiences and ideas from each of us, and we would all come together and pool our . . . For example, one month the topic was observations and evaluations and everybody was asked to bring their own tool, and we would share our observation and evaluation tools; and a lot of districts were revamping them, so you went back with 25 different observation forms, and evaluation forms that were helpful. Report cards—we did the same thing with that—sharing what our report card forms were. And I know that my district is looking into a new report card, so you were able to bring back that. So, you know, there was a lot that I was able to bring back that were sort of tried-and-true kinds of things, that wasn't just something you found in a book or on the Internet. This was something that a school district in the area was using, and it was something that they used successfully. So, you know, you bring that back and it's . . . I found it very helpful in that respect.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. That concludes the interview.
Appendix D

Transcript of Interview with Participant D
Interview Transcript – Participant D: Date: June 4, 2007

Interviewer: What do you recall of your expectations for working with a mentor, before you started the program?

Interview Participant D: I remember that before I started the program I thought it would be burdensome. And that it would be very time consuming to be working with a mentor.

Interviewer: What do you mean when you say burdensome?

Interview Participant D: Burdensome in that having someone shadowing me all day and looking over my day-to-day routine was going to be a lot. Having to reflect and discuss it all—and also having to do the same thing with my district administrators. It seemed like it was going to be repetitive.

Interviewer: Did your experience with your mentor meet your expectations? Why or why not?

Interview Participant D: No, actually I was pleasantly surprised. My mentor was not burdensome at all. Things were actually very relaxed and she allowed me the opportunity to develop my own ideas, and to share them as time went by, instead of having some set schedule. I was able to touch base with her when something was coming up, or at the culmination of an activity.

Interviewer: Did you find it repetitive?

Interview Participant D: It was slightly repetitive. But as a new administrator it was good to have the time to reflect, to be forced to do that. But I wasn't looking forward to it. I think it was inevitable, and something everyone needs to do.

Interviewer: If you ever decide to become a mentor yourself, would you do more than your mentor, less than your mentor, or the same as your mentor?

Interview Participant D: It would depend on the person I was mentoring. My mentor and I established early on that I was dedicated and hard-working, so she was able to pull back and give me some independence. If I was mentoring someone and I felt that they understood the process, then I would do about the same.

Interviewer: Would you have preferred that your work with your mentor encompassed more or less than the eight explorations and the research project? Explain.

Interview Participant D: Of course, I would've preferred less. My research project was a natural component of what I was doing anyway, but it seemed very overwhelming to think that I was going to have to do this huge additional project. But the eight explorations were a little more useful, and they helped me to clarify my role as an
administrator. So I would have preferred to pull back on the action research project, just because it was an awful lot to do, when your plate's already full.

Interviewer: What was the topic of your action research project?

Interview Participant D: It was on integrating technology into the curriculum, at an elementary school. We are a K-5. It started with staff development. About 30 staff members worked to develop lesson plans that incorporated higher level thinking skills, using appropriate technology tools. So we had just about wrapped up that stage when my action research project was starting, so it was a lot of deadlines that were not coinciding.

Interviewer: How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

Interview Participant D: Personally, I thought my mentor was fabulous, but professionally with not being in the building, not experiencing the day-to-day routines, and not knowing the population of parents or the student population, it didn't serve as broad a purpose as I thought it should. And again, she was absolutely approachable, but with all the repetitive issues, I didn't call her as often as I might have to run every little thing past her. She was great but I didn't find myself going to her to solve every little problem.

Interviewer: I will not make any attempt to contact your mentor, so would you mind if I ask whether she had any type of connection with your district?

Interview Participant D: She actually lives right in the town, but she is an administrator about two towns away, where the population is quite a bit different. She reminded me often that she had never dealt with a population like the one in my town. So I don't know that she knew a lot about the population, or about the demands of the population that I was dealing with.

Interviewer: What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for you professionally?

Interview Participant D: I think it would be all the additional positive support. Just to know that someone was always rooting for me. I think just to know that the mentor was always there, not to be a judge but to be a guide. That was one of the best aspects of the program.

Interviewer: What aspect of your work with your mentor did you find to be least useful to you professionally?

Interview Participant D: That would definitely be the action research project. Although it was a good thing to have a goal that I was working towards, that was productive. It seemed to be too much to take on. Going from the classroom to a new position, and
having to keep up with all the demands of that, and then also have to do an action research project, it just became too much.

Interviewer: What was the most helpful factor in establishing a working relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant D: I think that personality was the key to establishing a productive relationship. I found that psychologically, her personality was very similar to mine, and that helped to make it a very productive relationship.

Interviewer: Did you find that she was very responsive or concerned about the pressure you were under to meet deadlines? Did she offer any extension of time in order to help you to get things done?

Interview Participant D: It never came to that. I think the other thing I should clarify is that I was always one step ahead. For instance, each time that we were meeting I always had everything done, and then my questions for the next step. So I never discussed that with her. But she knew that the action research project was burdensome, because she would say to me things like "how are you juggling all of this?" So she was recognizing it, but I was not complaining. Informally, I would say something like this is really a tough time to get things done, or there's a lot of other things going on, but I never asked for an extension.

Interviewer: What was the greatest hindrance to forming a productive relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant D: There really wasn't anything.

Interviewer: In what ways do you think that the change from a one-year program to a two-year program may have helped or hindered your professional development?

Interview Participant D: One thing I felt was very helpful was the networking component of the monthly peer group meetings. The mentors in our group worked very hard to plan those meetings. Some familiar faces, we could network, the meetings were about an hour and a half long. So the meetings were short, but it was still a great chance for conversing with fellow administrators. And I liked having that continue into the second year. I even remember going to some other professional workshops or meetings around the state and seeing a familiar face and saying, "Hey, I know you." So that was a benefit of going into the second year and keeping that bond alive. I don't know if we would have had the same connection with just a one-year program. But I don't really know much about the one year program, enough to say whether I would have preferred that program.

Interviewer: Would any type of relationship-building activity have helped you and your mentor to have established a more productive relationship? Specify.

Interview Participant D: No, not really.
Interviewer: If your mentor was of the opposite gender, how did this factor affect your relationship?

Interview Participant D: No, it didn't make any difference.

Interviewer: If given the option, would you have preferred to select your own mentor?

Interview Participant D: Well, it might have been nice if I had had the option of picking somebody that I knew. That might have made some parts of it easier—maybe somebody more familiar with the needs of my student and parent populations.

Interviewer: If given the option which you have chosen someone from within your own district or simply someone who was more familiar with your district?

Interview Participant D: I would have chosen someone from outside the district, but who knew more about the district where I work.

Interviewer: Did the fact that you did not get any choice in the selection of your mentor affect your subsequent relationship with that mentor in any way? Specify.

Interview Participant D: No, I don't think so.

Interviewer: If given the option of selecting your own mentor, would you have chosen a person with whom you had a prior professional relationship, or would you have chosen someone with whom you had no prior professional relationship? Explain why.

Interview Participant D: I don't think it would've really mattered to me. I guess I would have gone with somebody with whom I had no prior professional relationship. But somebody who knew of the district and knew of the demands within the district. Having somebody who knew enough about the district deadlines, the demands—who didn't need to be taught about the organizational flow. Right now I have no one to help me out with some of the day-to-day stuff. I could use somebody to go to and say, "How do I do this?"

Interviewer: In what ways did the fact that your mentor came from outside of your district make a difference in your relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant D: I had a very positive relationship with my mentor from beginning to end, and I don't think anything would have changed that. Our personalities were very much alike.

Interviewer: In what ways did it help you professionally to have a mentor’s input on each of the State’s required activities?

Interview Participant D: Again, it was having somebody who is experienced, who could provide feedback and guidance. I liked having somebody who gave me input on what I
was doing without trying to tell me how to do every single step, but who just gave me a little guidance in the right direction.

Interviewer: How frequently do you expect to maintain contact with your mentor after the two-year program is officially ended?

Interview Participant D: Well, I would welcome any opportunity to work with her. I would imagine that we probably will touch base about once a year, to say hello, to catch up.

Interviewer: Do you think that your mentor derived any professional benefit through his or her participation in this program? Explain

Interview Participant D: As a retired administrator I don't know about any real professional benefit. But at our monthly meetings there were lots of conversations that touched on things any professional would find interesting and useful. So if she continued to be a mentor I would think that would benefit her. We shared a lot at our meetings, and maybe that would help someone to problem solve. Maybe I might think of something that she hadn't thought of before, or vice versa.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you personally did anything to assist your mentor in his or her professional development?

Interview Participant D: I actually do. She is very open to technology, and that is an area that I'm pretty good in. I got her using a flash drive, and I think that getting in the habit of using technology as a tool is something that she liked to develop. So perhaps that is something I contributed.

Interviewer: Describe how your mentor did or did not respect your privacy and need for confidentiality.

Interview Participant D: Oh, my mentor was always very respectful of my need for privacy and confidentiality. She always said to me that any assessment would be discussed in advance before we committed anything to writing. And we always had those discussions behind closed doors. We never discussed any confidential issues via e-mail, either.

Interviewer: In what ways was your mentor able to assist you with any non-school related issues?

Interview Participant D: My first year as an administrator was unique in that I had three different principals in the course of one year. My mentor helped me to cope with all those transitions and to decide whether or not to stay in this district, or to look for a job somewhere else. She helped me to assess what to do, and that was less of a professional issue than a personal one for me. And I appreciated having someone I could share my concerns with. That was very helpful.
Interviewer: What recommendations, if any, do you have for improving the mentoring component of the State’s licensure process?

Interview Participant D: Again, I would have to go back to the action research project. It’s not so much that you shouldn’t have to do something; it’s the timing of it—while you’re becoming familiar with so many other new things. I think I would rather see it be more of an evaluation procedure, where I’m applying new skills and where the mentor is assessing how well I’m doing my job. So I would be learning how I can improve rather than just writing a paper. It should be more about seeing what I do each day.

Interviewer: Finally, is there anything else you’d like to say about the state’s mentoring program?

Interview Participant D: No, but I would like to reiterate that our group was very well organized, and that the mentors, when we all got together, to discuss topics from the eight explorations were very helpful. At the beginning I really dreaded those, but after awhile I began to find that they were extremely helpful. I really wanted to go and hear about the observation models people were using, or what they were doing was scheduling, or with technology.

Interviewer: How many mentors were a part of your peer group?

Interview Participant D: I want to say approximately six to eight if they were all able to make it, and they were all from this county. And the way it worked was that different mentees offered their schools up and we rotated every month. So it was really good, because you got to see different administrators in their own home environment. We would sit down and we would cover the items on the agenda, like whatever exploration we were working on that month. Talk about any other issues that people might want to bring up, like successes or challenges. Then we would decide what the next agenda would be, pick a new school for the next meeting, and we were out of there in under two hours. But it was a great opportunity for networking. So there may have been some other problems, but that was definitely the best part of the program.

Interviewer: Did the mentors pretty much control the agenda of each of your meetings? Or was it more of an open forum?

Interview Participant D: I would say it was more of an open forum. I mean, everyone knew who the mentors were. You could tell the difference between who was retired and who was a brand-new administrator. But during the meeting, if I was the one who posed the crisis or the situation of the month, then I could say, “What would you do?” And even though the problem may have already been solved I could listen to everyone’s input. I could listen to everyone brainstorm. And even if they didn’t know my population, they might say, “Well you could try this.” And that might lead to a new idea, and you could build on that. It was really like a roundtable where one of the mentors might give their input, and then other people could also jump in and out and say, “Well, be careful, what
about this?” So there were people who could guide you and steer you away from the obvious mistakes. But they also let you do a lot of thinking on your own. I just regretted that I was never able to host a meeting at my school. But the buses went out at the wrong time, and there just wasn't enough parking. Anyway, that would be about it.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you very much.
Appendix E

Transcript of Interview with Participant E
Interview Transcript: Participant E – June 25, 2007

Interviewer: What do you recall of your expectations for working with a mentor before you started in this program?

Interview Participant E: I remember hoping that the person was going to provide me with support that maybe somebody in the district couldn't provide me with, you know, given their background. I was hoping that the person would be nurturing and help me to identify the weaknesses that I had as a novice administrator, and I don't know if this is applicable, but I was hoping to have somebody who wouldn't be so demanding on my time, because you know being a new administrator is overwhelming as it is.

Interviewer: Yes, and it is applicable, actually, that's a major issue for many people. And did you have a mentor when you were teaching?

Interview Participant E: Yes.

Interviewer: So you had experience working with mentors before this?

Interview Participant E: Yes.

Interviewer: Did your experience with your mentor meet your expectations? Why or why not?

Interview Participant E: Yes, my two years of being mentored did meet my expectations with respect to the person who was providing me with support, and without the person being too overbearing. So, that's a big yes.

Interviewer: If you ever decide to become a mentor yourself, would you do more than your mentor, less than your mentor, or the same as your mentor?

Interview Participant E: About the same.

Interviewer: Would you have preferred that your work with your mentor encompassed more or less than the eight explorations and the research project? Explain.

Interview Participant E: I wish there was more emphasis on roundtable discussions, and less emphasis on formal research projects. Even though the research project was job embedded I felt that it was inappropriate to ask someone who has already gone through a Masters in education to then have to go back and complete an additional research project. I felt that the time could have been used better by having the mentors bringing up different scenarios and then having us discuss appropriate ways to respond to them.

Interviewer: Did your group meet together with your mentor and others to talk about issues?
Interview Participant E: Yes. It was the most valuable time spent, where someone would bring up something, and then we would discuss it.

Interviewer: That's what most people seem to have found to be the most valuable part of the whole program. And then did other people who were in your group, in talking about various issues, seem to agree about the value of those projects?

Interview Participant E: Yes. For most people they expressed time demands as far as being a new administrator, being out at night events, being able to balance the job and other responsibilities, and the research projects seemed to be very stressful for everyone. And even though everyone provided a good report, which we all learned from I think that the explorations were enough, because we were all discussing these and doing research and I felt that the research projects was really a little redundant given the explorations and a little excessive given the time demands of a new administrator.

Interviewer: What was the topic of your project?

Interview Participant E: It was on induction programs for new staff members. I researched effective models of induction and compared those to our model of induction, which was something I probably would have done anyway. But as far as collecting the data and organizing it into the presentation form . . . the paper and the PowerPoint were both quite time consuming. So that was a little bit difficult, you know, when you go through a Masters program and you come out having taken 30 plus credits in administration, and then to be hit with the requirements such as this is a little bit disturbing, but the sessions—the Mentor sessions—were very valuable.

Interviewer: How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

Interview Participant E: I would say that working with my mentor, and being able to call her or e-mail her without her having to come and observe me, it was effective. I think it was the personal contact, you know, just the one on one . . . it was effective.

Interviewer: What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for you professionally?

Interview Participant E: It was probably just the coaching aspect where she would say, “So, what are you dealing with this week?” She would want to know if I was going to have to fire somebody or if there was going to be a difficult discussion with somebody. She would ask me, what have you done to prepare for it? What do you think you're going to say? You know she would listen to me and we would go back and forth a little bit. So, probably just the coaching . . .

Interviewer: Is your mentor currently a practicing administrator or is she retired?
Interview Participant E: She's retired, which I like because that means she's available.

Interviewer: What aspect of your work with your mentor did you find to be least useful to you professionally?

Interview Participant E: None really. I mean there wasn't anything I did with her that was not useful. I think, what was probably not very useful to me was that research project.

Interviewer: What was the most helpful factor in establishing a working relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant E: I think the fact that she really wanted to be a mentor and that she has a very nurturing personality. I think that really paved the way for a very open dialogue and . . . us really being able to relate to one another. It was just tremendous. I know others have not felt the same. They just kind of went through the motions.

Interviewer: What was the greatest hindrance to forming a productive relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant E: There was none.

Interviewer: In what ways do you think that the change from a one-year program to a two-year program may have helped or hindered your professional development?

Interview Participant E: I don't think that the change from one to two years hindered my professional development. I think it helped because it required me to go to the meetings. I think that was one of the most effective parts of the whole program—going to the meetings—sitting around listening to your colleagues who are in the same situation as you, sitting around listening to the experts, the other mentors. So, I guess no hindrance, and I guess helping would be just the need to go to meetings for another year rather than for one year.

Interviewer: Would any type of relationship-building activity have helped you and your mentor to have established a more productive relationship? Specify.

Interview Participant E: I don't believe so. I think that just having one-on-one time is the best . . . yes it was the best way. I think being able to meet outside the building, of school, you know, being able to go for coffee. . . . I think her availability helped us establish a productive relationship.

Interviewer: If your mentor was of the opposite gender, how did this factor affect your relationship?
Interview Participant E: It doesn't matter to me. However, I think the fact that she was a female just lent itself to us being that much closer. However, I think I would have been just as happy if I had had a competent male version of her.

Interviewer: If given the option, would you have preferred to select your own mentor?

Interview Participant E: Well, I want to say yes. Only because the first person that was assigned to me had no background in HR. He was a director of student services, and being new to HR I really needed someone who had dealt with HR. She didn't have this job, but as a principal and having central office experience meant that she had dealt with a lot of personnel issues. So yes, I think I would have chosen her. So I think I got lucky, but I think it is important to see what the person's background is and maybe logistically see where they live or where they work, and those factors would be helpful in choosing a mentor.

Interviewer: And did you just say that you had someone else originally assigned to be your mentor?

Interview Participant E: We worked together very well in the first year. But then I switched positions, and we talked about his background and I didn't feel it was an appropriate match any longer. He was a lovely person, but I expressed to him that I really needed someone with H. R. experience, and he agreed with me.

Interviewer: So what did they do?

Interview Participant E: He was very agreeable to me calling PSA and asking them to reassign, and they did.

Interviewer: You're the first person who ever told me that they asked to switch mentors.

Interview Participant E: I just felt that if they were making this as serious as it sounded, and the fact that I didn't know all the ins and outs of all the requirements, I wanted to make sure it was someone who would really help me.

Interviewer: Well, that seems to be a pretty reasonable expectation. So when you called PSA and told them what you needed, did they have any trouble finding you an appropriate match?

Interview Participant E: Yes they did. Not only did they have trouble finding someone who was appropriate, but they also seemed to have a terrible shortage, so it took them about a month to reassign me.

Interviewer: And then one day they called and said to you, "we have a new person?"

Interview Participant E: Yes. One day she called me and said "I've been assigned to you." We met for coffee, and I knew it would be a great match.
Interviewer: Next, I would have asked the following - Did the fact that you did not get any choice in the selection of your mentor affect your subsequent relationship with that mentor in any way? Specify. However since you actually did have some say in the choice of your mentor is there anything you'd like to add?

Interview Participant E: Just that I think choice is important. I think that would take care of the gender issue. If they are more comfortable with the same sex mentor, and also that they take a look at the person's background, and take a look logistically at where does this person live. Where does this person work? I think that's important.

Interviewer: If given the option of selecting your own mentor, would you have chosen a person with whom you had a prior professional relationship, or would you have chosen someone with whom you had no prior professional relationship? Explain why.

Interview Participant E: I think if I was open (sic) to choose anyone I would probably choose one of my former professors simply because I would know about their background and having a good, established background, I know we could jump over the introductory kind of stuff and get right down to the mentoring.

Interviewer: What about a person that you might have worked with in the past, or someone that you might be working with currently?

Interview Participant E: I think that, even though it's convenient to have someone in your district, I'd prefer not to because they wouldn't have experiences in other districts, in order to make it a richer mentorship. So maybe a person who does this job that I might have met at meetings would be appropriate. Probably not somebody in the district.

Interviewer: And that relates primarily to the fact that having somebody that you work with can change the nature of the relationship?

Interview Participant E: Yes.

Interviewer: In what ways did the fact that your mentor came from outside of your district make a difference in your relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant E: I guess that I knew it would be a confidential relationship. Even though you would hope that in any instance. But I knew that it was confidential, and I knew that she would give me information she had learned from having worked in other districts over the years. So I guess there was more openness on my part to listen to what she had to say, because she was bringing in new ideas And, I guess, just the trust. I think the trust factor was stronger because I didn't have to worry that, you know, I didn't have to censor what I was asking.

Interviewer: In what ways did it help you professionally to have a mentor’s input on each of the State’s required activities?
Interview Participant E: Well, just to have the person's guidance, because they were trained as a mentor. You know, the expectations were clear... as far as the research, and in the explorations.

Interviewer: How frequently do you expect to maintain contact with your mentor after the two-year program is officially ended?

Interview Participant E: Well, probably by e-mail, I would say, about two times a year, probably right around the holidays. She's a wonderful person.

Interviewer: Do you think that your mentor derived any professional benefit through his or her participation in this program? Explain.

Interview Participant E: What professional benefit? Well, I would say that there would be a personal benefit, because it would be satisfying to her to send somebody off with more professional growth than I had before she met me. Professional benefit? I guess that I was one of her first mentees. So I think it probably reinforced some of the right elements of a mentor-mentee relationship.

Interviewer: So you mean that you were the first person that she had ever mentored?

Interview Participant E: Well, because the program only started about two years ago, I was one of her first new... But I think she's got a few of us now... I just think that the fact we had a very easy-going relationship, that it was probably an agreeable experience for her to have someone who was not difficult. You know... to have someone who is really open to listening to what her suggestions were. I think she liked having someone who was open to listening to her advice.

Interviewer: Has she ever mentioned whether she plans to continue to do mentoring with others?

Interview Participant E: Yes, she actually has a few others, and I think she's just picked up a few more first-years.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you personally did anything to assist your mentor in his or her professional development?

Interview Participant E: Nothing other than what I just mentioned.

Interviewer: Describe how your mentor did or did not respect your privacy and need for confidentiality.

Interview Participant E: I think she was always 100% confidential.

Interviewer: And how did she manage to do that?
Interview Participant E: She always reinforced that I could tell her anything, and that she would advise me from her experiences, and I guess from early on there was always a trust factor there.

Interviewer: In what ways was your mentor able to assist you with any non-school related issues?

Interview Participant E: None that I can recall.

Interviewer: What recommendations, if any, do you have for improving the mentoring component of the State's licensure process?

Interview Participant E: I recommend that they make it a one-year program with regular mentor meetings.

Interviewer: And why is that?

Interview Participant E: Because people who come out of a Masters program have done a lot of work to get the administrative certificate, and I think a one-year mentorship is more appropriate than a two-year, given the hours that we work, and given the fact that many of us have been in education for a long time. I might think that the two-year option should be available for people in an accelerated program, like NJ-Excel, who maybe have not taken all the coursework. I feel that more emphasis should be placed on the scenarios and discussions, and maybe with some things that the State could provide us with—you know, maybe a list of topics that they would like us to cover in our roundtable discussions would be better than a formal research project. I think it would be more useful and more practical. That's about it.

Interviewer: Do you think that most of the people in your group would agree with you?

Interview Participant E: I'm willing to bet that everybody feels similar (sic). I know that some people are working on their doctorates, and are finding it extremely difficult to work on their doctorates; to be new administrators, and to participate in this program all at the same time. And I guess that from my perspective—after spending three years in a grad school program—that is considered paying your dues and learning; and certainly a year of being mentored is appropriate to kind of carry out what you've learned and to put it into practice... put theory into practice. But I think two years is excessive, given the amount of time that is needed in an administrative position.

Interviewer: And the last question is, is there anything else about the State's mentoring program that I have not yet asked you about that you think I should consider?

Interview Participant E: With respect to the online assessment component of the program, I don't think that that is really necessary. You have to go online and assess yourself at the
beginning and at the end. And I just don't think it's necessary. I think it took a very long time to complete. I know they want you to be self reflective. . . .

Interviewer: What do they do with this information?

Interview Participant E: I'm not too sure what they do with the data. I don't think they give it to the mentor. I think it's good to be reflective about your practice either as a teacher or as an administrator. But to just fill out a rubric on different topics regarding administration, and then to expect that two years later you will go back and measure your growth that way . . . it's just not likely.

Interviewer: So have you done the second self-assessment already?

Interview Participant E: I think so. I don't remember.

Interviewer: And did you find that anything had changed?

Interview Participant E: I couldn't remember from two years ago what my answers were the last time. You know, coming from the teacher profession I am naturally reflective, I reflect on my practice all the time and in our roundtable discussions, we talk about these topics, and I reflect on my practice daily, and I think that is a better measure than any rubric you could complete online. And I guess that's about it.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you very much.
Appendix F

Transcript of Interview with Participant F
Interview Transcript – Participant F – Date: June 26, 2007

Interviewer: What do you recall of your expectations for working with a mentor, before you started the program?

Interview Participant F: I don't know that I had many expectations. My situation was somewhat unique, because I started the year—this was two years ago—as a teacher, and then moved into the vice principal's position in October. So my head was spinning just with the regular duties of a new school district I was learning, and a brand new position. And so it was almost like someone said, “Here, you have to have a mentor.” I don't think I had any expectations. I think, once they started explaining it to me I thought okay, once they start working with me they'll explain some ideas about how to deal with parents and kids and teachers.

Interviewer: When you started as a teacher did you have a mentor?

Interview Participant F: No. When I started my first teaching job, I began in a small private school. So it was 3 1/2 years by myself, on my own. Then, when I moved to public school I was assigned a mentor, from the district. A woman from my building, but that was always just to talk about things within your own school. You know, logistical issues, the meetings and so on. But as far as the teaching aspect, that was more informal, mentoring with friends.

Interviewer: So when you began your administrative program, and you were assigned that mentor, did you think it was going to be anything like the experience you had when you were assigned that person as a teacher? Did you expect the role of that person would be in any way similar to the other person in your school?

Interview Participant F: Not really. The teacher was in the building where I taught. She really was great on logistics and how we did attendance at the school, and how we did paperwork like how we did grades on report cards, and how we did back-to-school night, those kinds of things. And when I thought about this mentor relationship, it was a woman who wasn't going to be in my school. It wasn't even going to be another vice principal, who didn't even share the same position as me. So I wasn't sure what to expect. I really wasn't sure what I was going to get. I just knew it was someone who'd been in the field for years, but that's all.

Interviewer: Without telling me their name, was your mentor a man or a woman?

Interview Participant F: A woman.

Interviewer: Is she currently an administrator, or is she retired now?

Interview Participant F: She's currently an administrator in another district.

Interviewer: And in what capacity is she an administrator?
Interview Participant F: She's a director of curriculum.

Interviewer: Did your experience with your mentor meet your expectations? Why or why not?

Interview Participant F: Yes and no. I thought she was a wonderful person. She's been in the field of education for a number of years. But what was difficult is that she has never been a vice principal, was never even a principal. So some of the things I was going through we could talk about and she had ideas and suggestions, but she'd never really been there herself, so that made it a little more difficult.

Interviewer: So you mean she went directly into curriculum without having been a building administrator?

Interview Participant F: Yes.

Interviewer: If you ever decide to become a mentor yourself, would you do more than your mentor, less than your mentor, or the same as your mentor?

Interview Participant F: Right, my experience is, she was still working, and I think that in order for someone to do a good job—and, this is not a knock on her because she had her own job to do—but it seems as if in order to have enough time to do this you would need to be retired. That's just my opinion. I would wait until I was retired, and that way I'd have more time to get into the buildings and see the people. I could take care of the necessary paperwork, and spend some time. But again, my situation is a little unique, because last year my school was only five minutes away from where she was working. So she could swing over to my school on her breaks, or when she could make the time available. But this year I moved down here, which is about a half hour to 40 minutes away from where she's at. But this is something we both agreed to keep because I knew her and she knew me, and we both felt very comfortable together. We'd basically meet halfway sometimes, and she did come down here a couple of times, but it was much more difficult, because it's not just right around the corner, and she had to leave her office. Again, she is still working her job as well, so it was harder. So, if I was going to do it I would try to do more, but I would also make sure I had time to do more.

Interviewer: Would you have preferred that your work with your mentor encompassed more or less than the eight explorations and the research project? Explain.

Interview Participant F: I found the eight explorations to be somewhat tedious at times. Like I didn't have enough to do already? And we actually had to go through and write them all out. And I understand from talking to people in other groups that maybe they didn't do it quite the same way. But in my group, we did go through each of the eight explorations on our own and wrote them out, and then talked about them and it took a lot of time. But I didn't have a lot of time during the day, because of dealing with other issues. So I spent a lot of my time off working on it. When I had a couple of weeks off, I
found myself coming in to work on days that I had off just to work on that, which again, is something that is required, so of course I did it. And then the action research project was something that I was working on anyway for my school and I made sure it was connected to where I am now. So I made sure the data was related to my school, and that it was definitely something I was going to do anyway.

Interviewer: Okay, so if you could have just dropped the eight explorations?

Interview Participant F: No, I think there was some value to them. In talking to people who were in other peer groups they used them as a springboard for discussions when they went to their meetings. It was "Think about these sets of questions or this one exploration, and all the related information on it, and when we get back together we're going to talk about these things. Not where you had to necessarily write out all of the answers. And in some way I think there might be more value to doing it that way. You're trusting that other people are all professionals, and that they're going to look into these things. So I think it's important to cover these, but should we spend as much time as we did on it? I don't know. Maybe my time could've been better spent on something else. But knowing that I have discuss these topics I'll come to the next peer group meeting prepared to discuss these one, two or three questions or whatever exploration we're going to discuss.

Interviewer: When your peer group met to talk about these things did all of the mentors who were present work together cooperatively in order to lead the discussions?

Interview Participant F: Oh yes. My group, which is made up of two or three other smaller groups, we all did it the same way. Everyone had to write out all the answers—everyone had to prepare statements and all that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: And all the mentors seemed to be doing it the same way?

Interview Participant F: Within our group, yes. But again, in talking with people who were in other groups they didn't necessarily do it the same way. Not that I'm blaming my mentor. That was the way they interpreted it, they thought they had to be written out, and that's how we did them, that's why we did them that way.

Interviewer: How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

Interview Participant F: I thought she was a great woman. I mean she's knowledgeable about education, she understands all the politics that are behind it. And she is very knowledgeable about curriculum, and that whole process. She understands the morals that are associated with education. Like I said, the only thing... and she tried. It was with specific issues with let's say a parent or a child. Where she might have said, "you might try this," or "this is how I would have handled it," or "this is what I've seen work." So that would be the only thing. Again, like I said, not that she didn't try to help me—she did give me suggestions. But I don't know how... I found myself leaning more towards
the principals I've worked with over the last two years, which I would have anyway. They had more useful information in terms of dealing with specific issues relating to parents or kids.

Interviewer: So you found yourself going to people here in the building or within your district to get guidance about specific building issues?

Interview Participant F: Yes, I would always find myself going to the principal I worked with the last couple of years, who was great.

Interviewer: Is he in this district?

Interview Participant F: No, he's in a different district. Last year I was in a different district. Now, this year I go to my principal all the time. Also, there are two vice principals, myself and another person who I can bounce ideas off of, so it just makes it a little easier I guess.

Interviewer: Have you ever gone to anyone in your peer group with a question or problem?

Interview Participant F: Yes, every once in a while you see something good that they've done at their school, something that seems pretty neat, and we'll share information. We have each other's e-mail addresses. And every once in awhile we'll call each other for something. For instance, I actually just called one of them today. I was interviewing someone for a teaching position, and the applicant had used one of my fellow peer group members as a reference, so I called her today. That's why I think that the program itself is great for networking, and it has really allowed me to branch out. Except that it's a little more difficult now that I'm down here in Morris County and everyone else is up in Sussex County, and not around the corner. But, again, that was a decision I made to stay with my group because we were comfortable with each other. I like my mentor and I told her I wanted to stay with her, instead of starting with someone brand-new.

Interviewer: What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for you professionally?

Interview Participant F: I guess it would be the wisdom that she has, for lack of a better word. She's a woman who's been in the field for a number of years, and she knows how to deal with people, and obviously she knows how to deal with the curriculum piece. Just in terms of the politics, she knows how to deal with superintendents—dealing with all kinds of personalities. I mean, she's been through a lot. Maybe not about specific issues that I'm going through, but in general she has a lot of knowledge about education, and I thought she was great.

Interviewer: What aspect of your work with your mentor did you find to be least useful to you professionally?
Interview Participant: Do you mean as far as the program, or the explorations?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interview Participant F: The explorations, parts of the explorations. I mean, parts of them were useful to give me an idea of how things run. It gave me a reason to delve into some of these things to find out more about them. And then my advisor kind of helped me to find out who in the district I could go to, or where I could look to find out specific information. That was probably the most helpful.

Interviewer: Okay, but if you were able to redesign the entire program, what part of it all do you think that you would throw out completely?

Interview Participant F: I would have to look at those explorations a little more closely now. I think I would look to pare them down a little bit. I would want to look at them a little bit more . . . maybe more general topics, what you could look into a little bit more, but maybe not have to write it all out. It takes so much time to have to write everything down. Maybe just give them some guidelines, you know, “here’s what I want you to go and find out, and then come back and share with us, in regards to what they do in your district.” A lot of that stuff was specific to a district that I’m not even in anymore. So it doesn’t matter how they do things up there. I mean, some of it’s probably the same . . . some of the ideas are the same. But a lot of the specific information is not the same as it would be here.

Interviewer: What was the most helpful factor in establishing a working relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant F: I’d like to say that since I’m a pretty easy going person and since she’s a pretty easy going person, and she understood the time constraints that I had, being a vice principal in a middle school, and I understood she’s working too, and has things going on as well. So, just the fact that she would come to see me, that she was flexible in terms of understanding my schedule and how much stuff I had going on. One of the things I remember was that it was October, and the school year had already started and I was just trying to play catch up, and she would understand that, and from the beginning she was just a real nice person to work with. That was the most important. The very first time I met her it was just an introductory interview and forget about trying to match personalities . . . they just set you up with someone. And I was wondering if I could work with this person. But it turned out she was a nice person, she was easy to talk to, and she was understanding of my schedule. And that’s why I stayed with her, because they gave both of us the option of cutting ties and me starting over with someone new down here. But in the end we both chose to stay together, because I felt so comfortable working with her. And I felt like I had already gone through one year of being a vice principal and I knew I could always go to see my principal here if I ever needed anything specific. So I knew I could do it again down here. She even came down and met with my principal here, so it seemed to be right for me to stay with her again this year.
Interviewer: What was the greatest hindrance to forming a productive relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant F: I think just the specific things she had gone through that were different than what I was doing. Although, once you’ve been in education for however many years . . . but the issues . . . and I think my principal would back me up on this, just that working in a middle school is certainly different than being in an elementary school. Even being in a high school you find the kids are different. They are middle school kids. In this school there are over a thousand kids, and I’m just constantly on the go and there’s a lot going on. And her not having been through that made it a lot more difficult for her to understand what my days were like.

Interviewer: In what ways do you think that the change from a one-year program to a two-year program may have helped or hindered your professional development?

Interview Participant F: I thought two years was fine, and it gave . . . it almost forces you to have a network and to meet these people. Whereas, if you didn’t have to do it, I don’t know if I would have made the time, because you get caught up in other things. But if you know that you have a peer meeting on say, April 27, at four o’clock, you put it in your schedule, and you’re there for it. But if you just said, “Hey guys, let’s try to get together for a meeting.” I just don’t know that it would happen. So that was good and over two years, you’re really building relationships. In the first year you’re really just learning who each other is (sic). But then in the second year I really found myself talking to other people a lot more, and finding out about their schools, and calling them and e-mailing them. Like I said, I just spoke to somebody this morning. Just a few weeks ago, somebody called me and said he wanted to find out what kind of discipline system I had here. So I think it’s good in terms of networking. I got to build better and stronger relationships with other principals I might have never had.

Interviewer: Would any type of relationship-building activity have helped you and your mentor to have established a more productive relationship? Specify.

Interview Participant F: No, if you mean just in terms of communicating with each other, there was no problem with that.

Interviewer: If your mentor was of the opposite gender, how did this factor affect your relationship?

Interview Participant F: No, it didn’t matter.

Interviewer: If given the option, would you have preferred to select your own mentor?

Interview Participant F: Do you mean someone from this district?
Interviewer: If they had said to you go out and pick anyone you'd like, would you have preferred that option?

Interview Participant F: Well, maybe a former principal. I wouldn't want my mentor to be the principal I work with right now.

Interviewer: Could you explain why?

Interview Participant F: Because of the things we talk about in our group, not that I would ever knock anyone, it's just the different things that you talk about there, and who you go to for help. I already have two principals I go to all the time. And I guess I might have chosen the principal of the school I had when I was teaching. He's already near retirement and I can't really think of anyone else. He was a vice principal and a principal of a middle school, and now he's principal of an elementary school. He's a good connection and in fact, I've already called him a couple of times in the last two years. I've reached out to him for different stuff already. He's probably the only one other than the mentor I have already.

Interviewer: Did the fact that you did not get any choice in the selection of your mentor affect your subsequent relationship with that mentor in any way? Specify.

Interview Participant F: No, not really.

Interviewer: If given the option of selecting your own mentor, would you have chosen a person with whom you had a prior professional relationship, or would you have chosen someone with whom you had no prior professional relationship? Explain why.

Interview Participant F: Like I said, the only person I would have chosen would have been that principal I worked for. If it was going to be a complete stranger, well then they might as well choose for me.

Interviewer: In what ways did the fact that your mentor came from outside of your district make a difference in your relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant F: She was outside of our district but the position she had was curriculum director at the high school where we sent our kids. All our middle school kids went to that regional high school. So going into it she actually knew more about the district than I did. She had lived up there and she knew what was going on, and all about the politics there. So actually it was the opposite, she knew more about it than I did going into it. She was connected and she knew my principal, this was the one up there. Basically, she knew all the administrators in the district.

Interviewer: Okay, so when you came down here, then suddenly she didn't know anyone anymore? So did that in any way lessen or diminish her effectiveness?
Interview Participant F: No, not in any way. Because at that point we had already built up our relationship and she knew, and I knew, that we could talk about nearly anything. We had already built that trust with one another, and I would just share with her stories. And the two districts are so different that it was actually very refreshing. So she would just listen, and it didn't make a difference or change anything. She didn't know... obviously she didn't know as much of the politics here, but it really didn't make too much difference.

Interviewer: In what ways did it help you professionally to have a mentor’s input on each of the State’s required activities?

Interview Participant F: Just hearing all of the other beginning administrators in my group tell stories about what they were going through was great. I would think, “boy I really have it easy compared to what they’re going through.” Sometimes they would share situations, and how they might have handled it, and I would think how I might have handled the same situation. One of the other mentors in our group—one is a current superintendent who kind of went through the ranks of administration, and he was able to shed light on a lot of situations, or give feedback about a middle school problem, and he had kind of been there and done that. The other two mentors, same situation. They currently are both building administrators. They could give a more hands-on experience kinds of answers. They'd also been there and done that. So I thought it was very helpful. And even my mentor, even though she's outside of it, she's coming at it from a different angle, and I thought here is someone else's idea about how to handle the situation. She would have lots of comments... it wasn't like she was an outsider. She had a lot of good ideas. So it was like having a totally different perspective in addition to the superintendent and the two building administrators. So you're getting ideas from everywhere.

Interviewer: How frequently do you expect to maintain contact with your mentor after the two-year program is officially ended?

Interview Participant F: I would think we'll stay in touch to some degree. We do still share e-mails. We do still touch base and she'll ask how I'm doing, and we talk about our families and such—we’ll have a quick conversation, and I'll ask how she is. Even from a personal level—not that we're going to go out or anything—but just the fact that I know there is another person I can call if I ever have any questions. I would say that we will keep in touch after this is all over, at least I will anyway.

Interviewer: Do you think that your mentor derived any professional benefit through his or her participation in this program? Explain

Interview Participant F: To some degree, she must have gotten something from hearing all of us. You can't go into something like this without getting something out of it. Even if you just sat there throughout all of our peer discussion groups, or through the one-on-one discussions, even if you just sat there and never said anything, you would have gotten a lot out of it. Everybody would've gotten something out of it. Even the superintendent,
who was at the top of the food chain, so to speak, he had to get something. Even if it was just all the personalities, he was hearing about what was happening in all these other districts, and maybe an idea might be worth bringing back to his own district. So I just can't imagine that you wouldn't get something out of it.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you personally did anything to assist your mentor in his or her professional development?

Interview Participant F: Oh no, I doubt it. Maybe just the stories I would tell her I guess. You know, they say you learn it best when you teach, and maybe just going through this whole process with me helped her to learn a little bit more about her own district. So maybe indirectly, not so much directly from me, but maybe listening to me, seeing the work I've done, all that—or the projects she saw me put together—might have helped her a little. She might've picked up something from all that. Again, you can't just sit there and not take anything from it. She definitely took something from it.

Interviewer: Describe how your mentor did or did not respect your privacy and need for confidentiality.

Interview Participant F: There was never any problem.

Interviewer: In what ways was your mentor able to assist you with any non-school related issues?

Interview Participant F: Yes, like when I was looking for a new job last year, and sending my resume around, I listed her as a reference. And she wrote a letter for me as well. She knew the superintendent in one of the districts where I was applying, and said she called him—she said she did anyway—to give me a reference. So, in that regard she helped me out quite a lot.

Interviewer: What recommendations, if any, do you have for improving the mentoring component of the State's licensure process?

Interview Participant F: I would take a look back at the explorations. And give more specific information to candidates—exactly what do you want them to do. And take into consideration what the job they're doing entails, with regard to the time constraints, and how they can get everything done. And also, I don't know what the pool of candidates looks like for mentors... but, you know, if you are a principal or a vice principal, try to find someone who probably should be retired, if they're really going to have the time to do it. I would like to see a limit... I think she said, there is, that they can only work with two or three mentees at a time. I would say forget the number. Just make sure that they're retired, and then let them figure out how to divide things up. If someone was retired, they can certainly handle four or five mentees at a time. They can handle it—not that they're not doing anything else. But they should be able to set aside their own time to get into the schools and meet with these people, and communicate with them. And, again, I'd hate to limit it to someone who only has building experience, as opposed to someone
who works with curriculum, but try to find someone who has that kind of building experience, at least a minimum of a few years of it, so that it's more closely related to what you are going through.

Interviewer: And lastly, is there anything at all about New Jersey's mentoring experience for principals that I haven't asked you that you think I should know about?

Interview Participant F: No, I don't think I had any set expectations going into it. My head was spinning at that time, we set up a meeting and I thought okay, here's another person who I can talk to and go to. Then I started finding out all of the things that we had to do. Certainly, I was frustrated at times. Finding myself working on stuff that, again, to some degree, was really only specific to the district where I was working at that time. And I'm not there anymore, so a lot of that information means nothing to me. It didn't open my eyes as to where I can go to find information, or what you really might need to know as an administrator. So, that way, when I move to a new district, I'll know what to do when I get here. So when I got to my new district I found myself saying, okay, let me find out how you do that here. And I did, I went and I found it out. It opened my eyes to what I didn't know. There were some things I needed to know that I didn't. As I said, it was a time of year that was very frustrating. I found some of the tasks to be somewhat tedious. And more than once I found myself sitting here thinking, "There are so many things I could be working on." Or else, on a day off, when I wished that I could just go home and spend some time with my own kids, instead of working on this. But certainly, I understand its part of the job, and one of the requirements. That's about it.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you very much.
Appendix G

Transcript of Interview with Participant G
Interview Transcript – Participant G: Date: July 3, 2007

Interviewer: What do you recall of your expectations for working with a mentor, before you started the program?

Interview Participant G: My expectation was, number one, that it would be somebody who would guide me through this program that the state had set up. There were certain paperwork expectations, certain things that we had to document for the state, and certain things that we had to accomplish. I was strongly hoping that he would help me to understand them and make sure I was meeting those requirements first of all. Probably more importantly though, I wanted somebody that I could talk to, and ask questions about (sic) who was outside of my district, if I needed to ask questions about the situation and didn't know where to go.

Interviewer: And when you were a teacher or a guidance counselor, did you have a mentor at that time?

Interview Participant G: Only very informally. It wasn't through any established program.

Interviewer: Did your experience with your mentor meet your expectations? Why or why not?

Interview Participant G: Yes, it was a very positive one. He did guide me through any of the paperwork I needed to complete. And in fact, since he seemed to be the point person for whether or not the paperwork was complete or not, as opposed to sending it on to a committee, that part turned out to be very easy. And he really was extremely helpful. I mean, he was always there, he made himself available at any point, he provided me with information that was pertinent to what I was doing in my job. So I felt it was a great help.

Interviewer: If you ever decide to become a mentor yourself, would you do more than your mentor, less than your mentor, or the same as your mentor?

Interview Participant G: I'm going to say about the same. On the one hand, I was looking for certain of the paperwork requirements to be extremely tedious and onerous, the weekly log of what I had to do, like connecting the standards to my job, I found to be extremely painful. Not only did I have to do all of that in my graduate program. Not only did I have to prove that I understood the process when I sat down for the six to eight hour assessment that I needed to do for my principalship, but apparently that wasn't enough, I now had to do it all over again. That part I hated to be perfectly honest with you. So, what I was hoping for out of my mentor, was that he wouldn't hover over me constantly, who wouldn't expect me to do tons and tons of things for him. But rather check in with me periodically, and who would be there for whatever questions I had. And not necessarily someone who would create more work for me when I was already overwhelmed with the work I had as a new vice principal. And I feel like he did. And that's kind of what my thought process was. The job is already hard enough as it is.
without all these other external requirements being put on us. So I think you would want to minimize that.

Interviewer: Would you have preferred that your work with your mentor encompassed more or less than the eight explorations and the research project? Explain

Interview Participant G: I'm going to say less only because—and this has nothing to do with my mentor who I think was fabulous—but I think he was working within certain expectations that were placed upon him by the state, and when they organized this the standards were too much. Now, the project wasn't too bad, because I was able to pick something that I was essentially doing anyway. It took a little bit of extra documentation. It took a little bit of extra work to put it all together for my group. But, for the most part, he was perfectly okay with whatever I was already doing within the context of my work, so that part worked out very well.

Interviewer: Good. What was the topic of your project?

Interview Participant G: With our project, we were looking to change the nature of the bell schedule in our school. We were running a traditional schedule. It was a matter of investigating data, communications with various stakeholder groups, and involving them in the decision making process, and then ultimately in the change process that was going to occur.

Interviewer: Also, was your mentor a current administrator, or retired?

Interview Participant G: He was retired during the scope of the two years, but he did some interim work. He also did some various other work (sic) for the state with school districts that were identified as being at risk. He was actively involved in education in some way, shape, or form the entire time that I was doing this.

Interviewer: And was he in the same county? Was he in several different counties?

Interview Participant G: The interim work, I believe, was in the same county, the work for the state was all over.

Interviewer: So then you could say that he had a very good idea of the nature of the schools in the region of the state that you were working in?

Interview Participant G: Yes, absolutely.

Interviewer: How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

Interview Participant G: I would say it was very useful. Again, he was always there with answers to questions that I had, he was always very helpful to say, "hey, you may want to think about X, Y and Z." And again, he was always focusing in on what my work
currently was. So he was helping me out with the work expectations that were given to me by my principal and my superintendent at the time. So everything we dealt with in that regard was very pertinent and I think very helpful.

Interviewer: Did your mentor have experience as a superintendent as well as a principal?

Interview Participant G: I think he was for a short period of time. I really couldn’t tell you everything that he did do (sic). He’s more or less done it all, but I think he was a superintendent for a time too, yes.

Interviewer: What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for you professionally?

Interview Participant G: Professionally? I think the group meetings, our cohort group, were very positive. Being able to get together with other people, to get out of the office for a little bit, to have time to reflect with them and with the mentor, I’d say that was the most helpful. That was probably the most important part of it for me.

Interviewer: Yes, a lot of people have said that. What aspect of your work with your mentor did you find to be least useful to you professionally?

Interview Participant G: Least useful had to do with all the paperwork we had to complete—the weekly logs, the standards—all the stuff I had done before, and proven myself more than competent to do, but had to do all over again.

Interviewer: What was the most helpful factor in establishing a working relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant G: I think it was just that he came in, we sat down, and just talked for a while. I think it was just him reaching out to me initially, and working through that part of the process, that was good.

Interviewer: So you just had an informal meeting to get acquainted?

Interview Participant G: Yes.

Interviewer: What was the greatest hindrance to forming a productive relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant G: It’s going to go back to the expectations that were placed on us. And part of it is because the process was new, and we were the first group to truly go through this. I think he was about as knowledgeable as you could be, but maybe wasn’t always able to express exactly what we were to do because it was the first time for him too. What it ultimately came down to, I think, was that whatever we did, as long as he was good with it, he kind of certified that with the state and that’s more or less where it ended. But there was some confusion for me. I didn’t know if my project was going to
be seen only by my group, and my mentor. I didn't know if my project was going to go on to a committee of people who had never worked with me before in the state, who didn't know me. So many things were kind of up in the air for me, and I wasn't completely clear about how to do certain things.

Interviewer: In what ways do you think that the change from a one-year program to a two-year program may have helped or hindered your professional development?

Interview Participant G: I have really little basis because I haven't talked to too many people about what the one-year program was like, other than some people telling me that it is like doing two years in one. So it's even more intensive, maybe, than what the one-year program was.

Interviewer: Even without having spoken to anyone else about the old program, do you think that you needed two years worth of time on this, or do you think one year would have been adequate?

Interview Participant G: No, but my project encompassed easily two years—and the project itself is still ongoing now. So from that respect (sic) my project would not have been as developed if I had only completed one year. But certainly I don't think I gained anything more in the second year that I hadn't already gotten in the first year. And truthfully, if I called my mentor up two years from now, he would help me with anything that I need. I mean the connections I made with my peer group, I could call them any time, and I'm sure they feel the same. Those connections were all established in year one.

Interviewer: Would any type of relationship-building activity have helped you and your mentor to have established a more productive relationship? Specify.

Interview Participant G: Food. We really didn't go through any sort of team-building activities, icebreaker activities, nothing like that.

Interviewer: Just food?

Interview Participant G: Yes, food—we met in restaurants, we had breakfast. We broke bread together and we just had a good time.

Interviewer: If your mentor was of the opposite gender, how did this factor affect your relationship?

Interview Participant G: I don't think it made any difference.

Interviewer: If given the option, would you have preferred to select your own mentor?

Interview Participant G: No.

Interviewer: You were satisfied with the choice that the state made for you?
Interview Participant G: Yes.

Interviewer: Did the fact that you did not get any choice in the selection of your mentor affect your subsequent relationship with that mentor in any way? Specify.

Interview Participant G: For me, no.

Interviewer: If given the option of selecting your own mentor, would you have chosen a person with whom you had a prior professional relationship, or would you have chosen someone with whom you had no prior professional relationship? Explain why.

Interview Participant G: In all honesty I don't think it had any bearing on the situation. If I had to choose I honestly would have picked either my principal or one of the other vice principals I was working with at the school. Now, my understanding is that the mentor is there to help you, even if the relationship that you're currently working in doesn't... isn't successful. And that's one of the reasons why the person is from outside of the organization, and that makes a whole lot of sense. So perhaps my having someone assigned to me circumvented some potential problems in that way. But my working relationships with everyone at the school are phenomenal, so in the end it wouldn't have been a conflict. But I can see how if something wasn't working out, then having that outside mentor would have been very good.

Interviewer: In what ways did the fact that your mentor came from outside of your district make a difference in your relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant G: Nothing other than having to establish a relationship from the beginning. But I was starting all over from scratch in all aspects after this move, because I wasn't working in my old district, so everything was new for me.

Interviewer: In what ways did it help you professionally to have a mentor's input on each of the State's required activities?

Interview Participant G: I think that was very good, because otherwise I would have just been just hazarding guesses as to what I was supposed to be accomplishing, so he was able to walk me through that.

Interviewer: How frequently do you expect to maintain contact with your mentor after the two-year program is officially ended?

Interview Participant G: Probably we may connect once a year, I'm guessing. We're not exactly on a week-to-week kind of basis, and we weren't even during the process either. So I'd say once a year.

Interviewer: Do you think that your mentor derived any professional benefit through his or her participation in this program? Explain
Interview Participant G: I think so, and this doesn't have anything to do with me personally, but I think my mentor enjoys this aspect of working with new people. And I know some of the mentoring group had worked with him a little more closely than I did, because perhaps he was an interim at the school where they were working; or something like that. And I can tell that this is a very positive experience for both of them too. Not just for myself, but I look at him with the other people in the group it's all very positive, and there has not been a single negative vibe going on around the table. So I can say it's been a very positive thing all around.

Interviewer: How many of you were in the cohort group?

Interview Participant G: Within the last six months, there were about five or six of us. Two or three were in their second year, and two or three were in their first year.

Interviewer: And did each one of you have a different mentor?

Interview Participant G: No, we all shared the same one.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you personally did anything to assist your mentor in his or her professional development?

Interview Participant G: I would have to say no with this, because at this stage of his career, professionally, he's done it all. I guess he's still learning, he's still growing, he's still actively involved. So while on the one hand, it probably does benefit him on a personal level. And he even told us that he always walks away with new ideas and different perspectives from our group. So in that way, the answer might be a yes, but I think it's definitely weighed more in our favor, as far as how much professional growth occurred.

Interviewer: Describe how your mentor did or did not respect your privacy and need for confidentiality.

Interview Participant G: He completely respected it.

Interviewer: So there was never any issue?

Interview Participant G: No, never.

Interviewer: In what ways was your mentor able to assist you with any non-school related issues?

Interview Participant G: There were really no non-school related issues that ever came up.
Interviewer: What recommendations, if any, do you have for improving the mentoring component of the State’s licensure process?

Interview Participant G: Take away all of the extraneous paperwork and whatnot that goes along with it. The log, I can perhaps see some benefit to, if for nothing else it’s another way that the mentor can connect with you and know what’s going on with you on a day-to-day basis, if you’re not having regular conversations. The standards are obnoxious—we’ve been through it all, we’ve done it, we’ve studied it, we’ve been tested on it. I mean enough is enough. And now they’re going to be asking us to do all of this professional development, connecting all our hours to the standards. And at a certain point you have to just stand back and let people do their jobs. If there was one thing that made me angry about the whole process, it was that. So just get out of my way and let me do my job.

Interviewer: Lastly, is there anything at all about the mentoring process that I haven’t asked you about that you’d like to discuss?

Interview Participant G: No, the bottom line is that the paperwork was onerous, and the relationship with the mentor was fabulous. And we’ve covered that. But that really is just a good summation of what I got out of the whole process.

Interviewer: Okay, that’s all of my questions. Thank you very much.
Appendix H

Transcript of Interview with Participant H
Interview Transcript – Participant H: Date: July 10, 2007

Interviewer: What do you recall of your expectations for working with a mentor, before you started the program?

Interview Participant H: My expectation was that it was going to be a situation where I would be able to sit down with an experienced administrator and bounce off ideas—say, “look, I just did this, was this a good thing, was it a bad thing, was there a better way?” More of a verbal, face-to-face kind of thing than what it actually turned out to be.

Interviewer: When you were a teacher did you have a mentor then?

Interview Participant H: I didn't. When I started teaching it was about 28 years ago, and at the time. You got your license, you got your classroom and a salute, “have a good time, hope you do well.” I didn't even have a supervisor when I start teaching.

Interviewer: So then you really didn't have any prior experience with mentoring in order to formulate any expectations when you went into this?

Interview Participant H: Not prior experience per se, but I did have some expectations about what a mentoring experience should be. You know, somebody to be a teacher. Someone to help you along, who would be there to guide you over the rough spots. Someone who could present you with other ideas, present you with other strategies, those kinds of things.

Interviewer: During the 28 years that you were a teacher did you ever act as a mentor for a beginning teacher?

Interview Participant H: I did.

Interviewer: Did your experience with your mentor meet your expectations? Why or why not?

Interview Participant H: So far my direct experience with my mentor has been great. He's always available by phone or by e-mail. He is also currently working himself. So it's a little bit difficult to get time either in my building or in his building to actually sit down. But I do think he's retiring soon, so hopefully that situation will change a little bit, and he'll have more availability to actually sit down and talk about things, he can actually walk around here a bit and shadow me, and do that kind of thing, and then offer suggestions. Like I said, that part of it is what I expected. The paperwork end of it is not necessarily . . . .

Interviewer: If you ever decide to become a mentor yourself, would you do more than your mentor, less than your mentor, or the same as your mentor?
Interview Participant H: This is not meant as a criticism, but hopefully I could do more of just sitting down and talking about situations. What would you do if? Or, I had this situation once. You know, dealing with things like the violence assessment reports, Special Ed. scenarios, difficult parents, School Board members whose children you have in the building, all of those. And the political stuff is a whole other side of it, dealing with all of that stuff, and the face-to-face conversations. You know, skip the paperwork, and putting together the portfolios, and standards, and writing up all the . . . you know, a brand-new principal has way more than their share of the paperwork to do. I don't think they need anymore of that. It's the other things that they need; the actual physical contact and conversation.

Interviewer: Would you have preferred that your work with your mentor encompassed more or less than the eight explorations and the research project? Explain

Interview Participant H: More than, but in a different way. I guess that using that framework would be okay to generate a conversation, maybe. But to make it a requirement of the whole mentor/resident relationship (sic), then you have to do all this research, create a portfolio, and then present an action research project . . . from what I've seen in my peer group of what's been put together as action research projects . . . really looks like, okay I needed to do this project so I've put together this PowerPoint presentation to show it to my peer group, and now I'm done. It doesn't go to anybody, and it's not evaluated in any way. Which kind of takes the meaning out of it for me, and makes it more of a, "I just have to get this done." Rather than, "We really want you to get something out of this whole process."

Interviewer: So it didn't really feel to you like it have any practical use?

Interview Participant H: No, to do action research in a year? What kind of action research project could I possibly do in one year, and have it be valid for me? I don't know that I can, and that's coming up for me, so I'm looking at choosing one of my building goals for a project, which is trying to infuse more test-taking strategies in the third, fourth and fifth grade classrooms to see if that improves test scores. But, again, looking at that within the confines of one year is not going to give me any real valid results.

Interviewer: I'm guessing you would need a couple of years, right?

Interview Participant H: Absolutely.

Interviewer: How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

Interview Participant H: Once again, he's been helpful. If I ask him questions there are always very good answers and the opportunity for discussions. But, since he also was working and had his own building to run, and was the only administrator in the building,
it's difficult to find the time within the school year, actually sit down and have those kinds of conversations.

Interviewer: So do you mean that outside of the scheduled peer group meetings that he was not really available to you on a regular basis?

Interview Participant H: No, he was available by phone and by e-mail, always. But not available if I were to say, “Can you come over to the building and look at this schedule?” “Can you sit down and go over this budget with me? I didn't feel like I could ask him to do that, knowing that he had his own building to run. And it's not like we're terribly close distance-wise. Our buildings are a good 30 minutes apart, so it's not like you can just zip around the corner.

Interviewer: What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for you professionally?

Interview Participant H: getting a chance to meet other experienced administrators. Even within our peer group there were several other mentors there, who within the discussions provided a lot of real-life examples of things they've been through, how they've handled it. There were lots of discussions about current state law. What was coming up, what we needed to be aware of. The kinds of situations that might really get you into hot water, the kinds of things that might keep you up at night. Those discussions were great.

Interviewer: Did you find that some of the other mentors in your peer group were possibly a little more available?

Interview Participant H: It did seem that way. I had a very interesting situation. When I first became principal here, I interviewed ... because there was no VP. I actually had three different administrative positions within my first year, not that that has anything to do with this. But the superintendent kept putting me into whatever position he needed to have filled. So I wound up being principal, then had to hire a new VP, and the VP was also brand-new, and was also in the mentoring program.

Interviewer: Was that person in your peer group?

Interview Participant H: No, a different cohort group. And because things did not work out well here, I had the opportunity to meet her mentor. At my suggestion, I said, “You know, maybe it would be a good idea if the three of us sat down and tried to talk through some of the difficulties we were having.”

Interviewer: You mean that your new VP was struggling in her new position?

Interview Participant H: Yes. So I actually had a one-on-one with her mentor, and really liked her a lot. We sat for about two hours, and just had a really good conversation. I kind of felt like she was ... and I said to her at the beginning, “I know you're not my
mentor, but feel free to jump in and offer advice at any time.” And it was great. So given the nature of the different personalities, I would say that there are some differences between the mentors themselves.

Interviewer: What aspect of your work with your mentor did you find to be least useful to you professionally?

Interview Participant H: just going through the standards and talking through those talking points. I felt really more like I was just giving him the information he needed to write his evaluations for me. You know, I provided him with all the documentation, and all of the observations that were written here by my direct supervisors here and all of that background material that he then used in order to be able to write his observations of me. So I kind of felt like I wasn't getting anything out of that. So it really was kind of laborious on my part, getting all of these documents together, or justifying how I completed different things and just turning all that paperwork over to him. I don't know that it was all that meaningful.

Interviewer: What was the most helpful factor in establishing a working relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant H: Well, I think we had a jump on that because he was a part of this school district, when I was a teacher here. He was actually an administrator here. We didn't have any direct contact at that time, but I did know who he was. And his wife was also an employee of the district; she was a secretary in this district. So I did have a little bit of a connection. Not that I knew him, but I knew of him. From the beginning we had a little bit of history. So you could say it was a comfortable relationship from the start.

Interviewer: What was the greatest hindrance to forming a productive relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant H: Time. Absolutely, it was time. Personally, on my part, I had so many issues, especially when my VP left me in midyear. So I was at that point alone, and I had a ton of observations that she hadn't finished that I now had to do—with testing coming up—you know the whole game. So I was like, “Are you kidding me? I have to get all this ready for my mentor?” I had so many other things on my plate, at that moment, there was just no way. I mean, that was at the bottom of the list. So time was definitely the biggest hindrance.

Interviewer: In what ways do you think that the change from a one-year program to a two-year program may have helped or hindered your professional development?

Interview Participant H: Well, if it was one year, I'd be almost done. I don't know if it's the change in the length of time necessarily, as the quality of the program. I think that if they're looking for things to address. Then, it's the issue of the paperwork that they're asking brand new administrators to do. I just don't know if it's all that necessary. There's
just got to be a better way to walk someone through the standards, or to walk them through the whole leadership deal without saying to them, “Here's a packet, fill it out, provide all the documentation and then show it to your mentor.” In talking to other colleagues about the one year program I know that it was someone in your building, you filled out a couple of forms, you paid some money, and at the end of the year they signed-off that yes, you were terrific. You got all the “excellent” checks. So it really wasn’t a mentoring program.

Interviewer: Yes, when I went through it I never really felt like my mentor was somebody that I could talk to.

Interview Participant H: It's tough, because you’re not given the time you need to really develop a relationship with your mentor. If I hadn't known mine previously, I would only know him from the couple of times we've been able to get together. You don't get a chance to really know somebody that way. I don't know if there's some way to build in—maybe if the state really wants to get serious about mentoring and if they want it to be somebody from outside of your district, then instead of all this paperwork stuff, build in about two or three days during the year when the district agrees that this administrator will be given a professional development day to spend with their mentor. Then you've got a whole day set aside with that person. Forget all this paperwork.

Interviewer: Would any type of relationship-building activity have helped you and your mentor to have established a more productive relationship? Specify.

Interview Participant H: No, I don't think so. Like I said, it's not the relationship that was at issue. I think the relationship was fine. It's all the other stuff.

Interviewer: If your mentor was of the opposite gender, how did this factor affect your relationship?

Interview Participant H: None. It had no effect.

Interviewer: If given the option, would you have preferred to select your own mentor?

Interview Participant H: Interesting question. Yes, I think I would have.

Interviewer: And if you had chosen your own mentor, would you have picked somebody from in the district, or outside your own district?

Interview Participant H: I think I would have stuck with someone from outside the district. Only because politically, sometimes you don't know who you should talk to within your own district, and sometimes it's not such a good idea. So I definitely think it would've been someone from outside the district.

Interviewer: Did the fact that you did not get any choice in the selection of your mentor affect your subsequent relationship with that mentor in any way? Specify.
Interview Participant H: No.

Interviewer: If given the option of selecting your own mentor, would you have chosen a person with whom you had a prior professional relationship, or would you have chosen someone with whom you had no prior professional relationship? Explain why.

Interview Participant H: Somewhere in the middle. Obviously, if it was a complete stranger, I wouldn't have known who they were. If it was someone I was too close to, they wouldn't have been objective enough. So it would've been someone that I just knew or that I knew the reputation of. It would be more than just a stranger.

Interviewer: In what ways did the fact that your mentor came from outside of your district make a difference in your relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant H: Well, I think that it made me a little bit more comfortable talking about some of the things that were going on. For example, some of the things within the administrative team, or issues regarding some of the Board members and how to handle them, and knowing that he wasn't himself involved in any of that. So I kind of trusted what he said, maybe a little bit more than I would have trusted my fellow building principal.

Interviewer: In what ways did it help you professionally to have a mentor's input on each of the State's required activities?

Interview Participant H: It was helpful. I think he was also a brand-new mentor, as well as this being a brand-new program. So there were some things that he was kind of unsure of too with going through this whole process. Sometimes it was a case where he needed to find out how to do something before he could share it with me, which was fine, because like I said, this process is new to everybody.

Interviewer: How frequently do you expect to maintain contact with your mentor after the two-year program is officially ended?

Interview Participant H: Honestly this is his last year before retirement and I don't know if he's looking to maintain any kind of relationship, once this year of mentoring is over. My assumption is that he'll go on to a new group of residents (sic), if the program continues.

Interviewer: Do you think that your mentor derived any professional benefit through his or her participation in this program? Explain

Interview Participant H: He took a lot of the things that I did this year, and wanted to go back and use them in his building. That was a compliment to me, I thought it was great. I certainly used a lot of his ideas as well. I hope he did.
Interviewer: Do you feel that you personally did anything to assist your mentor in his or her professional development?

Interview Participant H: I know we had a lot of discussions. I was doing a lot of analysis of test data. You know, comparing it by classroom, actually using it to make the teachers maybe a little bit more accountable for the students moving through their rooms. So he was pretty interested in that, and we spent some time discussing what I was doing—how I was using it, how I was presenting it to the teachers, how I figured out where the weak areas were, that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Describe how your mentor did or did not respect your privacy and need for confidentiality.

Interview Participant H: Oh, he absolutely did. That wasn't a problem at all.

Interviewer: In what ways was your mentor able to assist you with any non-school related issues?

Interview Participant H: I don't know that we ever had any non school-related discussions, I can't recall any.

Interviewer: What recommendations, if any, do you have for improving the mentoring component of the State's licensure process?

Interview Participant H: One was that I liked the previous question about having some input into who your mentor is, because sometimes even distance can be an issue. You know, traveling to meet your mentor, traveling to meet with the peer group, if you have a little bit of input as to where your peer group was going to meet, who the mentor was going to be, in relation to what the distance is going to be, that would be helpful. You're not always going to know everybody out there, so I don't know that being allowed to choose your mentor is such a good idea, but at least having some input into the decision really would be helpful. And also, really take a look at the paperwork requirements you're asking (sic). And this whole action research project, seriously think about asking someone to do one year's worth of research and making it be valid for something in your building, that's very difficult to do. And, as I mentioned before, I think from what I've seen so far, it turns into just an assignment I have to get done or my fifth grade teacher is going to give me recess detention. It's like that kind of... I just have to do it to get it done. And then look at instead saying to districts, "You have a brand new administrator, they have a mentor. You must give them four professional development days a year to spend with the mentor." Then you've given the administrator time, and the opportunity to sit down with somebody with experience, to talk about whatever they need to talk about.

Interviewer: Okay, and my last question. Is there anything at all about the mentoring program that I haven't asked, that you think would be important?
Interview Participant H: I guess that, the way I understand the program now, the mentor recommends that you receive your standard certificate, and then you do. That worries me a little bit. Not necessarily for me personally. I got along fine with my mentor, and things are great. But what if it is not such a good relationship? Where does the resident go? The resident could be an excellent administrator in their district, but not necessarily someone the mentor . . . it seems like the mentor has a great deal of power when it comes to the granting of that certificate. The district has no input? If this resident has excellent evaluations from their own superiors, and mentor says no, then my understanding is that you don’t get your standard certificate. . . . for someone that I had no choice in choosing (sic) to have that much power in deciding whether I get my administrator’s certificate . . . I don’t know, that’s just a little troublesome for me.

Interviewer: I know at least one person that I have interviewed already requested a change in their mentor, and was granted it.

Interview Participant H: Well it’s good that they found that out before the end. Because if you get to the end, and the mentor says no, then what? I mean, I’d assume that you’d have some inkling before the end that it’s not going well. But it just seems that you’re giving this mentor an awful lot of power over all these residents, and I know that they’ve received some training . . . but how much, and how qualified are they to evaluate these residents who they see, maybe, a couple of times a year? I don’t know. Maybe the district needs to have a little say into that final outcome. And it might work the other way as well. Maybe the mentor might love the person, but the district is saying . . . There’s no crossover.

Interviewer: That’s a very interesting point. Thank you very much.
Appendix I

Transcript of Interview with Participant I
Interview Transcript – Participant I Date: July 25, 2007

Interviewer: What do you recall of your expectations for working with a mentor, before you started the program?

Interview Participant I: I expected that my mentor . . . originally I thought that the program would be the old program, and that I would have an in-district mentor. So I was surprised to find out that my mentor would be from out-of-district. I assumed a mentor would be someone who would help me with some of the typical day-in and day-out responsibilities of a principal in terms of knowing what paperwork would be due, or what kind of situations would arise, and that it would be somebody I could call if I was running into a problem.

Interviewer: When you were a teacher, had you been assigned a mentor then?

Interview Participant I: No I had not, because when I was teaching that was not yet a requirement. However, I did mentor other teachers.

Interviewer: So you did have a pretty good basis for knowing what to expect from this kind of relationship?

Interview Participant I: Yes.

Interviewer: Did your experience with your mentor meet your expectations? Why or why not?

Interview Participant I: In terms of my relationship with my mentor? My mentor was someone who was assessable by phone call or e-mail if I had any questions or concerns, in that respect, yes. But as a mentor who was from out-of-district, there were many issues or procedures that they were not aware of, and not necessarily able to share information with me about those.

Interviewer: I don't need to know the name of your mentor, and I will never try to contact them, but can you tell me if your mentor is currently a practicing administrator or retired?

Interview Participant I: Yes, currently practicing.

Interviewer: If you ever decide to become a mentor yourself, would you do more than your mentor, less than your mentor, or the same as your mentor?

Interview Participant I: I would make the same kind of great effort that my mentor did. But, I would hope that by the time I became a mentor there would be a way to more clearly define the role.

Interviewer: Would you have preferred that your work with your mentor encompassed more or less than the eight explorations and the research project? Explain
Interview Participant I: I think I would have liked to have worked more with my mentor on day-to-day operational side of being a principal, and less on the research project.

Interviewer: What was the topic of your research project?

Interview Participant I: The topic of my research was the use of behavioral contracts with students, particularly regarding bus behavior.

Interviewer: How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

Interview Participant I: In terms of professional development, I'm not really convinced that the mentoring component enhanced my professional development. It was certainly a positive relationship, in terms of having someone to run things by, but in terms of actual professional development, I don't think that the mentoring process was really helpful.

Interviewer: And is that because the eight explorations were not really relevant to your day-to-day experiences as a principal?

Interview Participant I: I felt that the eight explorations areas, in some ways, were a lot of added work, almost a repeat of graduate school. In some ways they got in the way of what I needed to do day-to-day, they almost doubled the work.

Interviewer: What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for you professionally?

Interview Participant I: Getting to work with a mentor who had lots of experience, who could share his experiences with me, and networking with other new and experienced administrators.

Interviewer: What aspect of your work with your mentor did you find to be least useful to you professionally?

Interview Participant I: Just the extreme amount of time required to participate in this program ... in terms of the paperwork that was involved, and there was a lot of paperwork. Doing an action research project, although interesting, was again, when trying to learn the ropes of a new job, was all a whole lot of extra work, that in some ways got in the way of the job. I think the time commitment was extreme for all of us, both the mentors and the mentees, in terms of trying to make our schedules work so that we could have monthly peer group meetings. And then have time for meetings with my mentor regarding my action research project and other aspects of the program. It was very time consuming.

Interviewer: When you met with your peer group did everybody else's mentor also come and do some form of round table discussion with you? Was that the general format?
Interview Participant I: We tried. But for all the mentors it was . . . . They didn't really feel that it had been clearly defined—what those meetings should be about. So sometimes a mentor tried to facilitate something, but not all the other mentors necessarily agreed. For those of us that were being mentored the actual roundtable discussions, when we did them, were probably the most beneficial to me, and hearing that other people might be having similar experiences, or something that I hadn't heard before, that might come up. But the structure of those peer meetings was not overly clear.

Interviewer: What was the most helpful factor in establishing a working relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant I: The fact that the mentor was someone from out of the district, on one or two occasions, if something came up within the district, and I wasn't quite sure how to approach it, before approaching someone inside the district, I had a chance to go to an outside, objective person. And that was always a nice thing. To have someone that you could call who was removed from the situation who could have a little bit more of an objective perspective on it.

Interviewer: What was the greatest hindrance to forming a productive relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant I: The fact that my mentor and I were both very busy with our own jobs, and not in the same district. And although fairly close geographically, still I needed to logistically work out a way to speak with this person, or meet with this person. Sometimes, I needed to do that at 7:00 a.m. or late at night, to talk on the phone, because during the day both of us had some very, very busy job responsibilities.

Interviewer: In what ways do you think that the change from a one-year program to a two-year program may have helped or hindered your professional development?

Interview Participant I: Because I was so busy with this two-year program, I found that I was not necessarily taking advantages of other opportunities to attend workshops, or other professional development activities that my district generously allows for, because I had other commitments such as meetings I had to attend for this program, and the action research project I needed to keep working on . . . . Time—again.

Interviewer: Would any type of relationship-building activity have helped you and your mentor to have established a more productive relationship? Specify.

Interview Participant I: No, actually, my mentor and I were able to establish a good relationship very quickly. We attended the first . . . . they had an overall general meeting for all the mentors and mentees, with sort of an icebreaker activity. That was nice to meet some others, but in terms of my mentor and I, my mentor was very good at making sure that we talked, met, and got to know each other a little before engaging in the group activities.
Interviewer: And at any time did you ever wish that you could switch your mentor, or have someone different?

Interview Participant I: I really enjoyed working with my mentor a lot. The only wish I had, was that they had switched to an out-of-district, two-year mentoring program.

Interviewer: If your mentor was of the opposite gender, how did this factor affect your relationship?

Interview Participant I: No, it didn't.

Interviewer: And was your mentor a male or a female?

Interview Participant I: Male.

Interviewer: If given the option, would you have preferred to select your own mentor?

Interview Participant I: Because the mentors were someone from out of district, I don't really think that option would have made much of a difference for me because it would have been someone unknown to me. Anyway, having some type of a survey as to what I would be looking for in a mentor, in order to match up mentors and mentees, might have been nice. But again, I was fortunate that I had a mentor that I got along with very well.

Interviewer: Did the fact that you did not get any choice in the selection of your mentor affect your subsequent relationship with that mentor in any way? Specify.

Interview Participant I: Not in my case.

Interviewer: If given the option of selecting your own mentor, would you have chosen a person with whom you had a prior professional relationship, or would you have chosen someone with whom you had no prior professional relationship? Explain why.

Interview Participant I: Again, because the mentor had to be someone from out of the district, I'm not sure that there would have been a great deal of options for me to find somebody who was serving as a mentor and with whom I had any professional relationship. But if someone had existed, that might have been nice.

Interviewer: What if they had waived that rule, and said that you could pick anyone, regardless of whether they worked in the district or not?

Interview Participant I: I think I would've liked to have that option.

Interviewer: And would you have picked a person from inside the district?

Interview Participant I: Oh yes, I would have.
Interviewer: In what ways did the fact that your mentor came from outside of your district make a difference in your relationship with your mentor?

Interview Participant I: Well, I had to really develop a relationship of trust with that mentor, in terms of confidentiality. Because, of course, if we were discussing things that might have been of a sensitive nature within my district, I needed to feel confident that my mentor, and I were discussing whatever my needs were, without discussing the district. So I definitely needed to feel that my mentor and I could have that type of back-and-forth trust. And for my mentor also, if he was going to share anything about where he had previously worked, he had to know that he could trust me to see that information as confidential.

Interviewer: In talking to others, some people felt that if they had a person from inside their district, that confidentiality would have been a problem in the other direction, meaning that they wouldn’t have felt so free to speak openly with someone that they had to work with. But, you don’t feel that this would be an issue for you?

Interview Participant I: I think that if I had the option to choose someone from the district that obviously I would choose someone who I felt I could speak with confidentially, and have as a confidant, and not be concerned about where that would go. The only negative I could see to that is that person could end up feeling put-upon, in that others might, you know, try to ask questions . . . . So I could certainly see where in some cases it might be difficult, depending on the size of the district one was working in, and how many people you have available.

Interviewer: In what ways did it help you professionally to have a mentor’s input on each of the State’s required activities?

Interview Participant I: It’s always nice to have someone else’s opinions, or to have someone as a sounding board, so I certainly don’t think it hurt to have someone to speak with about all those areas, or just to have someone in your corner to say, “Yeah, you handled that well.” Or, “You’re doing a great job.” So, in that way it was supportive to have someone to speak to.

Interviewer: How frequently do you expect to maintain contact with your mentor after the two-year program is officially ended?

Interview Participant I: I’m hoping that we can continue a professional collaboration. You know, someone to speak to on an occasional basis. I don’t expect to be speaking with my mentor as frequently of course. But I certainly hope that we stay in touch. And my mentor made me aware that if I ever needed to call, or if I ever had any questions, I could feel free to do so.

Interviewer: So, have you been in touch with him any time lately?
Interview Participant I: Yes, I have, once or twice.

Interviewer: Do you think that your mentor derived any professional benefit through his or her participation in this program? Explain

Interview Participant I: Yes, I think he did. As I said, having mentored other teachers myself, through the normal mentoring process, and having student teachers, I know that I always learn new things, or thinking about something in a different way just from speaking to someone who was just starting out, in that situation... and I know that my mentor expressed that he felt some of that in working with his mentorees (sic), and that you always gain a new perspective on something.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you personally did anything to assist your mentor in his or her professional development?

Interview Participant I: Actually, because my mentor was looking at some materials or programs for his district, there were times when I voluntarily looked at things with him, or looked at materials, or programs, or discussed things that we were doing. And I do believe he benefited from that.

Interviewer: Did he have the same job title as you at that time?

Interview Participant I: No.

Interviewer: Describe how your mentor did or did not respect your privacy and need for confidentiality.

Interview Participant I: My mentor went to many extremes, or efforts as necessary to do that. And if there was something sensitive to discuss, he made himself very accessible, where I could call him at home in the evening, or go meet early before my school day started, if we needed to discuss something. And if there was something that I felt I wanted to discuss with him away from my building, we'd meet at a neutral location, or meet in his professional space.

Interviewer: In what ways was your mentor able to assist you with any non-school related issues?

Interview Participant I: Well, my mentor, having had years of experience as an administrator, was always speaking with me, and others that he was mentoring, about striking a balance between your professional and your personal responsibilities, and he was very careful to check and make sure that there was no time of feeling overwhelmed by trying to accomplish everything—including the extra demands of this program.

Interviewer: What recommendations, if any, do you have for improving the mentoring component of the State's licensure process?
Interview Participant I: Number one, I think two years is too long.

Interviewer: What time frame do you recommend?

Interview Participant I: I certainly think a one-year mentoring program makes a lot more sense. And I think it should be a much less structured program, in terms of so much paperwork that needs to be completed by the mentee (sic) and the mentor. There are several assessments per year. It's a bit redundant with what is done within each district in terms of evaluation and assessment. I think that the informal roundtable discussions, getting together with other new and experienced administrators in a less formalized component (sic) is very nice. I think that the action research in the second year . . . many people felt very . . . although it's always good to do action research, I think, in speaking to other people who were being mentored besides myself, there was a general feeling of, this is almost insulting after going through graduate programs to be asked to do something like this in a formal course kind of way. And, I think that it really needs to be looked at whether an out-of-district mentor makes the most sense in that having no mentor within the district makes it very difficult to not have someone to talk to about just the typical day-to-day operations of the district, and what's required of a principal.

Interviewer: Just to go back a moment to what you were saying about the Roundtable discussions with the peer group, you were saying before that it didn't seem as if the mentors had a clear idea about how to run them. So should they have . . . .

Interview Participant I: Not really, they didn't all agree. When you have a peer group meeting it's supposed to be a group of mentors and a group of mentorees (sic). There might be one mentor who really wants to help try to coordinate those meetings. The State pretty much says, "You're mentoring him, and you're mentoring him. Here's the phone numbers, now pretty much go try to form your own groups." So then the mentors have to geographically find some people, mentors and mentorees (sic) who can logistically, after working through long days in their schools, and who probably want to stay in their buildings and keep working, find a way to find a place to meet and, once there, there's no actual agenda. I think they need to clarify that. That really needs to be clarified for both the mentors and the mentorees (sic). We were supposed to write peer reflections—reflect upon those meetings—again . . . .

Interviewer: Should there be a formal agenda for each meeting?

Interview Participant I: I don't know that there needs to be an agenda. I think there needs to be some definition as to . . . I think that perhaps there should be some type of expectation of what those groups should be for—the purpose of those groups. Although I think that the mentors were given some expectations, I think that the practicality of all that tended to go by the wayside once the group of people would start to meet, everyone had had so much to deal with during their day that everyone just wanted to talk. So I think that too much structure wouldn't be a good thing either. I think that the mentors felt that they should be doing something, that there should be something that they could
report back, and say that something happened. But I think trying to plan something like
that doesn’t go very well.

Interviewer: And finally, is there anything at all about the mentoring process that I
haven’t asked about that you think might be important?

Interview Participant 1: I think that when people are in graduate school, if this program is
going to stay as it is, I think there should be more coordination between the graduate
programs, within the state at least, and this program, so that the program is not so
redundant and repetitive of what people have already done in graduate school.

Interviewer: OK, thanks very much.
Appendix J

Institutional Review Board Items
March 2, 2007

John C. Anzul
107 Prospect Street
Madison, NJ 07940

Dear Mr. Anzul,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed the information you have submitted addressing the concerns for your proposal entitled “An Examination of the Experiences of Beginning School Principals Who are Participating in New Jersey's Revised Mentoring Program, as Part of Their Professional Training as School Leaders”. Your research protocol is hereby approved as revised through expedited review. The IRB reserves the right to recall the proposal at any time for full review.

Enclosed for your records are the signed Request for Approval form and the stamped original Informed Consent Form. Make copies only of these stamped forms.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

According to federal regulations, continuing review of already approved research is mandated to take place at least 12 months after this initial approval. You will receive communication from the IRB Office for this several months before the anniversary date of your initial approval.
Thank you for your cooperation.

In harmony with federal regulations, none of the investigators or research staff involved in the study took part in the final discussion and the vote.

Sincerely,

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

cc Dr. Anthony Colella

Please review Seton Hall University IRB’s Policies and Procedures on website (http://www.provost.shu.edu/IRB) for more information. Please note the following requirements:

Adverse Reactions: If any untoward incidents or adverse reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to immediately notify in writing the Seton Hall University IRB Director, your sponsor and any federal regulatory institutions which may oversee this research, such as the OHRP or the FDA. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending further review by the IRB.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, please communicate your request in writing (with revised copies of the protocol and/or informed consent where applicable and the Amendment Form) to the IRB Director. The new procedures cannot be initiated until you receive IRB approval.

Completion of Study: Please notify Seton Hall University’s IRB Director in writing as soon as the research has been completed, along with any results obtained.

Non-Compliance: Any issue of non-compliance to regulations will be reported to Seton Hall University’s IRB Director, your sponsor and any federal regulatory institutions which may oversee this research, such as the OHRP or the FDA. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending further review by the IRB.

Renewal: It is the principal investigator’s responsibility to maintain IRB approval. A Continuing Review Form will be mailed to you prior to your initial approval anniversary date. Note: No research may be conducted (except to prevent immediate hazards to subjects), no data collected, nor any subjects enrolled after the expiration date.
REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION OR RELATED ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

All material must be typed.

PROJECT TITLE: AN EXAMINATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF BEGINNING SCHOOL PRINCIPALS WHO ARE PARTICIPATING IN NEW JERSEY'S REVISED MENTORING PROGRAM, AS PART OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AS SCHOOL LEADERS

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:

In making this application, I (we) certify that I (we) have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research, development, and related activities involving human subjects. I (we) shall comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I (we) further acknowledge my (our) obligation to (1) obtain written approval of significant deviations from the originally-approved protocol BEFORE making those deviations, and (2) report immediately all adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Director of the Institutional Review Board, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079.

RESEARCHER(S) OR PROJECT DIRECTOR(S): John C. Anzul

11/18/06

DATE

RESEARCHER'S ADVISOR OR DEPARTMENTAL SUPERVISOR:

Anthony Colella, Ph. D.

DATE

1/18/07

**Please print or type out names of all researchers below signature.
Use separate sheet of paper, if necessary.**

My signature indicates that I have reviewed the attached materials and consider them to meet IRB standards.

The request for approval submitted by the above researcher(s) was considered by the IRB for Research Involving Human Subjects Research at the January 2007 meeting.

The application was approved _ , not approved _ by the Committee. Special conditions were ___

were not ___ set by the IRB. (Any special conditions are described on the reverse side.)

DIRECTOR,

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

Mary J. Purjeda, Ph. D.

DATE

3/1/07
February 4, 2008

John C. Anzul
107 Prospect Street
Madison, NJ 07940

Dear Mr. Anzul,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your Continuing Review application for your research proposal entitled "An Examination of the Experiences of Beginning School Principals Who are Participating in New Jersey's Revised Mentoring Program, as Part of their Professional Training as School Leaders".

You are hereby granted another 12-month approval effective March 2, 2008.

If any changes are desired in this protocol, they must be submitted to the IRB for approval before implementation.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

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

cc: Dr. Anthony Colella
This is to certify that

John C. Anzul

has completed the Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 11/28/2006.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

participants.
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Affiliation
1. The researcher, John C. Anzul, is a student at Seton Hall University’s College of Education and Human Services, in the Department of Education Administration, Management and Policy, working on a doctoral degree in Educational Administration (K – 12).

Purpose
2. The purpose of this study is to document the reported experiences of several beginning principals who are participating in New Jersey’s revised mentoring program, in order to gain a better understanding of this aspect of the professional education of school leaders.

If the interviewee agrees to participate in this study, it is anticipated that the interview would require approximately 60 – 90 minutes. This may possibly be followed by a second follow-up interview if any clarifications are needed for accuracy.

Procedures
3. If the interviewee agrees to participate in this study he/she will meet with the researcher in a mutually agreed upon public location, such as a restaurant or the library. No meeting will be held on the interviewee’s school premises. At that time there will be a discussion of the interviewee’s responses to a series of 23 questions regarding various aspects of his/her experiences since he/she entered into New Jersey’s revised mentoring program.

No aspects of the research procedures are experimental in nature.

Research Instrument
4. The set of interview questions in this study is called the Research Instrument. An indicative sample of the type of questions the interviewee will be asked would be the first three:

A. How would you describe your overall experiences with your mentor in terms of usefulness to you in your professional development?

(Continued)
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

B. What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for you professionally?

C. What do you think was the most productive aspect of this relationship for your mentor professionally?

Voluntary Participation
5. Participation in this study is purely voluntary, and the participant has the option of withdrawing from this study at any time that he/she wishes.

Refusal to participate, or discontinuing participation at any time, will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

Anonymity
6. The identities of participants in this study will be known only to the researcher. No identifying information will be shared with any other individual without the interviewee’s express consent.

Confidentiality
7. The identities of all interview participants will be kept strictly confidential. In the subsequent analysis of data the interviewees will be identified solely by numbers. The only information regarding the participants that will be reported will be: age, gender, the District Factor Grouping of the interviewee’s school district, and some of the interviewee’s prior professional history, such as years spent in other administrative roles. If any circumstance ever required that other confidential information be disclosed, the researcher is required to have the interviewee’s express permission in advance.

Any data that is stored electronically will only be kept on a CD or USB memory key. All electronic and recorded data, logs, and other notes, will be stored in a locked fire-proof box in the researcher’s home office for a period of three years after the conclusion of the study. All materials containing confidential information will then be destroyed.

Seton Hall University
Institutional Review Board

MAR 02 2007

Approval Date

Expiration Date

MAR 02 2008

(Continued)
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Records Access
8. In addition to the researcher and his faculty advisor, no other individual will have access to any recorded data, logs, and other notes, or any other research materials that may contain confidential information. Only the researcher will do all of the transcriptions of taped interviews.

Foreseeable Risks
9. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts anticipated as a result of this study.

Benefits
10. A direct benefit of this research is that participants will have the opportunity to reflect upon their professional development.

The potential benefit of the knowledge expected to result from this study is that policy makers will be able to better evaluate the mentoring component of the licensing process.

Remuneration
11. No remuneration, financial or otherwise, is being offered for participation in the study. Participants will not be required to incur any type of expense as a result of this study.

Seton Hall University
Institutional Review Board

MAR 02 2007

Approval Date

(Continued)

Expiration Date
MAR 02 2008
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Contact Information
12. For any pertinent information regarding this research, or the interviewee's rights, please use the following contact information:

Researcher: John C. Anzul
Mt. Tabor Elementary School
(973) 889-3361

Advisor: Anthony Colella, Ph.D.
Seton Hall University
400 South Orange Avenue
South Orange, NJ 07079
Department of Educational Management, Policy and Leadership
[Department Phone] (973) 761-9397

Seton Hall University
Office of Institutional Review Board
Dr. Mary Ruzicka, Director
(973) 313-6314

Tape Recordings
13. All interviews will be tape-recorded using audiotape only, according to the following provisions:
   • Separate written permission for the interview to be audiotaped is requested. The participant can indicate permission for taping in the space provided on the next page.
   • During any audiotaping, all interviewees will be identified solely by code numbers.
   • Only the researcher and his faculty advisor will have access to, or listen to the audiotape recordings.
   • All audiotape recordings will be transcribed using electronic transcription software.
   • All audiotape transcriptions will be done solely by the researcher.
   • All audiotape recordings will be stored in a locked fire-proof box.
   • All audiotape recordings will be destroyed after a period of three (3) years after the conclusion of the research study.

Seton Hall University
Institutional Review Board
MAR 02 2007

Expiration Date
MAR 02 2008
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Copies of this Form
14. All interviewees will be provided with two (2) copies of this Informed Consent Form in advance. Please sign and date both copies. Return one (1) copy to the researcher, and keep the other copy for your records. The researcher will retain a copy of this document for at least three (3) years following the conclusion of this study.

________________________________________________________________________

Interview Participant (Please Print Your Name)

________________________________________________________________________

Signature of Interview Participant

________________________________________________________________________

Date

I give my permission for this interview to be audiotaped according to the provisions listed in Item # 13 above.

________________________________________________________________________

Signature of Interview Participant

________________________________________________________________________

Date

Seton Hall University
Institutional Review Board

Expiry Date

MAR 02 2007

Expiration Date

MAR 02 2008

Approval Date
Appendix K

Interview Participant Recruitment Items
Dear ---:

I am a student at Seton Hall University's College of Education and Human Services, in the Department of Education Administration, Management and Policy, working on my doctoral degree in Educational Administration (K - 12).

The purpose of my study is to document the reported experiences of several beginning principals who are participating in New Jersey's revised mentoring program, in order to gain a better understanding of this aspect of the professional education of school leaders.

If you agree to participate in this study as an interviewee, I anticipate that we would require approximately 60 - 90 minutes for an initial meeting. This may possibly be followed by a second follow-up interview that would be approximately 60 minutes in length.

If you agree to participate in this study we will meet in a mutually agreed upon public location, such as a restaurant or the library. We will not meet on your school premises. At that time we will discuss your answers to a series of 23 questions regarding various aspects of your experiences since you entered into New Jersey's revised mentoring program. The validity of my research instrument (the 23 questions) has been verified by a number of qualified experts in the field of education.

Participation in this study is purely voluntary, and you have the option of withdrawing from this study at any time that you wish. No benefits, financial or otherwise, are being offered for participation in the study.

The identities of all interview participants will be kept strictly confidential. All participants will be identified by numbers. The only identifying information regarding the participants that will be reported will be: age, gender, your school district's District Factor Grouping, and some of your prior professional history, such as years spent in other administrative roles.

All recorded data, logs, and other notes, will be stored in a locked fire-proof box in the researcher's home office for a period of three years after the conclusion of the study. All materials containing confidential information will then be destroyed.

Thank you in advance for your assistance. I very much appreciate your willingness to lend your time and attention to my project.

Sincerely,

John C. Anzul
Date

Name
Address

Dear ----:
This past fall you indicated a willingness to participate in my research study. If you are still interested I would now like to schedule a time when we can meet to conduct an interview. I have listed several dates and times when I could meet on the attached scheduling form. Please indicate your first choice, a rain date, choice of times, and choice of location. I will confirm our appointment by e-mail at least two days before we’re scheduled to meet. Please keep a copy of the scheduling form for your records, and return the other copy to me in the enclosed envelope.

Also, two certified copies of an Informed Consent Form are enclosed. Please read this over carefully and sign both copies. Keep one copy for your records and return the other to me in the enclosed envelope.

I appreciate your assistance, and I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,

John C. Aizul

Encl.
**Please be assured that all information about the participants in this study will be kept strictly confidential. All identifying information will be converted to letters and numerals.**

The Interview will take approximately sixty minutes, and will be tape recorded.

I, (Print Name) ____________________________________________, have agreed to participate in the research study conducted by John C. Anzul.

Professional Title:

School District Where Employed:

School Name:

I am in (Circle One Choice) Year One / Year Two of the Mentoring Program

Mailing Address:

Phone Number:

E-mail Address:

Preferred Location for Interview:

________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature                                      Date
Appendix L

Data Analysis Samples
1. Art float to position

(mentor to hire intern)

3. Less time, but diff. activity

5. Possible new perspective? - maybe

6. Circles again

2. Peer groups:
   → structure → shifting

4. Helped because of change in gr. levels

7. No 1 input was opp.

23. Peer groups - case study

®
Introducer: If given the option, would you have preferred to select your own mentor?

Interview Subject A: Yes, definitely. Yes, I would have chosen someone who was, you know, doing what I'm doing, you know, building-level principal or building-level vice principal, rather than a superintendent, or a retired superintendent. And I think that geographical location would have been helpful. I think that if it was a mentor in my district, because I was in such, you know, two quality districts, with quality mentors there I think that there would have been someone in-house who would have been wonderful.

Introducer: Did the fact that you did not get any choice in the selection of your mentor affect your subsequent relationship with that mentor in any way? Specify.

Interview Subject A: No, I don't think it was negative that I—I still think that I have a mentor who has been very helpful and committed and organized. You know, in my case it worked out well.

Introducer: If given the option of selecting your own mentor, would you have chosen a person with whom you had a prior professional relationship, or would you have chosen someone with whom you had no prior professional relationship? Explain why.

Interview Subject A: I would have chosen someone who either I knew and worked with, and had respect for, or someone that I had heard about through a colleague to say yeah, this is someone you want to be like, this is someone you want to mentor (sic), this is, you know, a great leader, great educational leader, lead teacher, whatever you want to call the person, and this is somebody you want to model.

Introducer: So you don't feel that you would have needed to actually know them personally, ahead of time?

Interview Subject A: In my case, there were people that I knew that I would have liked to mentor (sic), that I would have liked to have that relationship with. But I don't think in every case you would have to know—you know, it's not a black and white decision. I don't think in every case you'd have to know that person. It's not a black and white.

Introducer: In what ways did the fact that your mentor came from outside of your district make a difference in your relationship with your mentor?

Interview Subject A: The very positive side is that I felt very free to ask any kind of question what-so-ever, because my tenure wasn't at stake, and I knew that nothing would get back to my superintendent or my colleagues. So it made it very safe. The fact that he lives an hour away added to that safety.

Introducer: In what ways did it help you professionally to have a mentor's input on each of the State's required activities?

Interview Subject A: Yes, definitely, absolutely. My mentor is a stickler for details. He is...
(A) (except 6)

1. Initially wanted choice
2. Said it didn't matter (but it got a choice)
3. B worried about others who had tried
4. Divided evenly on need for prior relationship
5. Those that cared about relationships wanted more cough
6. A liked peer or cousin for company
7. B liked private units for company

(B) Reading across hier of dep. Unbalanced had mixed results:

- Avatar pool was mostly turf
- Strategies felt strongly aligned with same job
- Those that didn't were usually unhappy w/ experience

- But same side advantages to hire LMA dep
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Positive - Confidential</strong></td>
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<td>Initially + skill + role with not</td>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>Men</td>
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<td>Ok - because it was the one she wanted</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>No - Inside knowledge is crucial - less useful guidance</td>
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<td><strong>Yes - easier if known</strong></td>
<td>Easier to get to work + then no false beliefs</td>
<td>No, know rel. but should know distinct issues</td>
<td>Made things more difficult</td>
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<td>Yes, contained was in year 2</td>
<td>Did me, choice + that was helpful</td>
<td>Yes, past pros.</td>
<td>Much better if outside</td>
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<td>Yes - always others instead</td>
<td>Yes, not very strong role, but old</td>
<td>Yes, essential</td>
<td>Positive, but needs to know distinct</td>
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<td>No - still be done</td>
<td>Had no effect</td>
<td>No, didn't matter</td>
<td>Might be important for others</td>
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<td>Yes, would have preferred</td>
<td>Yes, weak relationship</td>
<td>Yes, not a strong - Ambivalent</td>
<td>Convenience in a large + others might benefit</td>
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<td>Yes, would have preferred</td>
<td>Made it better</td>
<td>No, didn't matter</td>
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