

THE MENTORING PROCESS: Regroup the Loop

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Abstract

Novices are often unprepared to meet the demanding teaching career that awaits them after they graduate college. Therefore, school districts need supports in place to help them succeed, and mentoring is one way these teachers can receive that guidance and assistance during their first year. Mentoring is a formal relationship between a novice and a veteran teacher, which is established to provide the novice teacher with various kinds of support; it is a substantial aspect of a systematic induction process (Washburn-Moses, 2010). The New Jersey Department of Education requires all novice teachers to be matched upon hire with a selected mentor, who has been trained to fulfill this role. Although mentoring is required by the state of New Jersey, the way in which each district enacts this mandate contributes to considerable variability in the quality of support the novice teacher receives. The Loop District, the site of this study, is one example of a district that employs mentoring but may not be reaping all its benefits because it does not have a systematic, research-based approach.

The purpose of this study was to implement a research-based mentoring program in the Loop School District and document what happened in order to inform future practice. All matched mentors and novices teaching at School Three during the 2012-2013 school year participated by offering their perspectives on the research-based mentoring program and its new components, which provided a structure for meetings and classroom observations. Data was gathered through interviews, recordings of dyad meetings, document collection, and surveys.

The data suggested that distributing protocols to be used during meetings was appreciated but they were underutilized. The observation component was helpful when classroom coverage and other coordination was provided for the teachers observing. Doing pre and post-observation conferences were reported to increase the benefits of observation. Findings pointed to the

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importance of professional development for mentors and novices to encourage more in depth and effective implementation of the components of the program.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The media influences the public's perception of educational issues, with a keen focus on the critical role of the teacher in the classroom. Journalists report the failures of schools and tend to point to teachers as the reason for students' lack of progress. Some proclaim American education is a national embarrassment and a threat to the nation's future (Thomas & Wingert, 2010). Thomas and Wingert declared, "What really makes a difference, what matters more than the class size or the textbook, the teaching method or the technology, or even the curriculum, is the quality of the teacher" (p. 1). This viewpoint is not a recent trend but has been expressed for at least 30 years as illustrated on *Time Magazine's* 1980 cover, entitled "HELP! Teacher Can't Teach!" (Appendix A). Clearly, teachers do play an important role in education and schools need to recruit and maintain high quality professionals. Although teachers do not bear the sole responsibility for a "failing school," teacher effectiveness is a strong determinant of differences in student learning (Sanders & Rivers, 1996); therefore, it is not surprising that teacher quality has long been scrutinized and examined. One way to enhance teacher performance and decrease negative perception of teachers may include successfully mentoring new teachers.

Schools need to support novice teachers from the time of hire to help them become more effective and ready to meet the high level of expectation for the profession (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Mentoring could be an efficient way to provide this support. By definition, mentoring is the establishment of a formal relationship between a novice and a veteran teacher to provide the novice teacher with various kinds of support; it is a significant aspect of a systematic induction process (Washburn-Moses, 2010). For the purpose of this study, a *mentor* is defined as a veteran teacher who has been assigned to provide induction support to a *novice*, a first year teacher, in the same district. If quality teachers are desired, school administrators must prioritize the

training and support of novice teachers, which sends the message that district administrators value teachers and want them to excel in hopes that they continue (Wong, 2002).

As a strategy to support their development, mentoring new teachers is increasingly important. The U.S. Census Bureau indicates that K-12 teaching is an occupation that continues to increase in size with a constant influx of novice teachers; the average teacher has five or less years of experience (Ingersoll, 2012). Novice teachers lack the skills of veterans; for instance, novice teachers may struggle to explain content to students from various perspectives, respond accurately to student questions, plan appropriate lessons, or even teach key concepts present in the curriculum (New Jersey Department of Education, 2010). In addition to demonstrating mastery of those skills, veteran teachers have familiarity with the district, the history of the city in which the school is located, and rapport with students' families. This combination of knowledge and experience puts them in a good position to guide, support, and offer advice to novice teachers. Researchers indicate that if knowledge and experience were utilized systematically in a comprehensive mentoring program, then less experienced novices could gain the skills needed to be successful (Northwest Territory Teacher Induction, 2011).

Numerous teachers enter the profession each year; however, many often lack the skills that experienced teachers have and must acquire the knowledge that is needed to be successful on the job. This is because pre-service training fails to fully prepare teachers for the complex realities of the classroom (Sava, 2010). One important way to improve teacher quality is through mentoring programs. These programs are being implemented in school districts to provide novice teachers with the skills they did not develop through pre-service training programs; however, compared to other industrialized nations, the United States lacks a systematic approach to recruiting, preparing, and retaining teachers as a result of poor or non-existent induction

approaches (Darling-Hammond, 2011). Researchers show that the majority of new teachers who leave are unsatisfied with their career choice, feel unprepared, or feel that their expectations of what teaching would be like are not well matched with their actual experiences (Jandoli, 2013). Furthermore, teaching is complex work and often pre-employment teacher preparation is insufficient in providing all the knowledge and skills necessary to be a successful teacher (Ingersoll, 2012). Student teaching is too often reduced, omitted, or placed in classrooms that do not model best practice or do not serve high-need students (Darling-Hammond, 2011).

With that said, the information and skills learned may be non-generalizable and non-transferrable into many classroom environments. Pre-service teachers cannot learn everything from books or from being mentored periodically (Darling-Hammond, 2011); rather, they need a structured and fully developed program. Novice teachers tend to be underprepared and lack the skills necessary to manage their classroom or solve problems related to teaching and student learning (Jandoli, 2013); yet, they are often expected to find their own way with little scaffolding or guidance (Sava, 2010). In other words, a significant portion of pedagogical knowledge needed to be an effective teacher must be acquired on the job. Schools should, but do not always, make up the difference between what novices learn in their pre-service training and what they need to know to be high quality teachers by providing systematic structures, in which, novices can learn to teach, survive, and succeed as teachers through an induction program that includes an effective mentoring component (Ingersoll, 2012).

Consequences of Ineffective Preparation

Hiring new teachers creates a need to support novices so that they can be successful. Implementing large recruitment efforts without providing proper training or employing retention strategies to encourage the development of effective new teachers, “is like pouring water into a

leaky bucket instead of repairing it” (Darling-Hammond, 2011, para. 41). In fact, between 40% and 50% of new teachers leave within the first five years of entering the profession (Ingersoll, 2012). Moreover, these rates are much higher for those teachers with less preparation and no mentoring at all (Darling-Hammond, 2011). Darling-Hammond, (2011) asserted that this trend will not slow until the needs of beginning teachers are addressed adequately.

Since a productive first year of teaching can be a predictor of overall success and retention, structured supports supplied by the school district are vitally important for novice teachers (Northwest Territory Teacher Induction, 2011). The failure to provide effective in-service support and continued training for novices directly affects student achievement. Recent research, which documents the correlation between teachers and student achievement, has found that student achievement increases with teacher experience (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2008). Furthermore, substantial evidence suggests that, among other variables, well-prepared, capable teachers have the largest impact on students’ learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Successfully training and retaining high-quality teachers is essential because effective teachers constitute a valuable resource for schools. In addition, low teacher retention rates have an impact not only on school success and achievement, but also district finances. The cost of teacher attrition is estimated at \$15,000 on average per recruit who leaves (Darling-Hammond, 2011). A supportive, mentoring program and teacher preparation, along with administrative support and the influence of strong colleagues, can contribute to higher teacher retention rates. Because teacher attrition can be detrimental to learner achievement and since novices may leave the profession when support is not offered, it is critical for schools to have systems in place before new teachers are hired.

Mentoring in New Jersey

It has been established that novice teachers need support and more training than pre-service programs provide; consequently, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has outlined specific mentoring requirements for schools. NJDOE requires all novice teachers to be matched upon hire with a selected mentor, who has been trained to fulfill this role. According to the NJDOE (2008), mentor teachers should be selected on the basis of their excellence in teaching, content expertise, and understanding of the district norms, values, and resources.

Before selection and matching can occur, NJDOE requires assigned mentors to attend “rigorous” training, although rigorous is not defined and the training is neither provided nor even outlined in its guidelines. NJDOE (2008) does provide suggested mentor training topics including, but not limited to, communication and trust building, roles and responsibilities of mentors and novice teachers, the challenges of mentoring, the adult learner, use of professional growth activities, and other teaching components. In New Jersey, mentors are required to be paid a stipend and the mentoring stipend for traditional route teachers is \$550 for 30 weeks of mentoring. The mentoring stipend for alternate route teachers is \$450 for the 20-day clinical experience and \$550 for the remaining 30 weeks of mentoring (NJDOE, 2008). The novice is obliged to pay the mentor unless the stipend is funded by the state or the district, but there is no way of determining the amount of funding in advance.

A comprehensive mentoring program is an effective way of improving the skills of beginning teachers and increasing their retention rates (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2009; Washburn-Moses, 2010). For example, mentors can help novices with instructional challenges, classroom management, curriculum, assessment, and school policy and procedures, just to name a few (Gall & Acheson, 2011; Moss, 2010). A teacher mentoring program helps new and beginning teachers become competent and effective professionals in the classroom. Likewise,

enhancing the skills of novices as a way to prevent losing new teachers positively impacts overall student growth and learning (Ingersoll, 2012). In addition to having a valuable effect on practice, an effective mentoring program may promote student learning because it encourages teacher collaboration and interaction and an increased understanding of the community and school culture (Northwest Territory Teacher Induction, 2011). Therefore, requiring new teachers to receive mentoring, not only supports them in their critical first year, but hopefully encourages them to remain teaching in that school. Researchers suggest districts establish support structures to improve the performance and retention of new hires; hence, a mentoring program that provides novices with the services necessary for success is a worthwhile investment.

Furthermore, mentoring sets up an intentional collegial relationship between two teachers and provides structured opportunities to grow professionally together. While assisting their novices, mentors may develop leadership skills, gain new ideas, enhance their self-image, and share pedagogical and other strategies with colleagues. Learning new instructional strategies from novices and working closely with them encourages veterans to modify and reinvigorate their practice as well (Moss, 2010). This two-way learning process is best enacted through shared authority in the hopes that neither party feels threatened or belittled by the other in exchanging ideas that contribute to building knowledge. This mutually beneficial experience for both novices and veteran teachers aids in strengthening a school's morale and enhancing instructional strategies (Boreen, Johnson, Niday, & Potts, 2009)

Statement of the Problem of Practice

Although the Loop District, the site of the study, requires novice teachers to have mentors, it is not adequately meeting the mentoring regulations set forth by the state to create proper induction for its novice teachers. The Loop School District, an urban district serving a

racially diverse student population, consists of eight neighborhood elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. Each year, a number of novice teachers enter the schools in the district, presumably with hopes of a long-lasting career. Unfortunately, not all of these teachers stay until their tenure year, and many leave after their first or second year. Prior to the intervention reported in this study, the Loop School District had no structured mentoring program, including no clear guidelines, which outlined the role of mentors and novices. Given the research on the magnitude of an induction plan that includes mentoring for retaining and developing the skills of novice teachers, putting an induction plan in place is of critical importance. Two recent analyses of a large-scale national teacher survey revealed that the most important predictor of a teacher's ongoing commitment to the profession is the quality of mentoring, not the mere existence of the program (Darling-Hammond, 2011). This assertion provides evidence regarding the significance of carrying out a structured, research-based mentoring program, not simply having one that exists in name only.

In compliance with the NJDOE requirements and research-based benefits, the Loop School District requires that every new teacher receive 20 hours of mentoring during their first year after hire, although the role and responsibilities of the mentor are not clearly articulated. The New Jersey Department of Education guidance document instructs districts to create mentoring plans that can

provide evidence of activities that enable the novice teacher to develop and implement lessons, develop relevant classroom management strategies, understand and utilize formative and summative assessments to guide student learning, and engage in opportunities to see effective classroom practices modeled by others (NJDOE, 2008, p. 1).

Although mentors are assigned to novices, there is a lack of documentation, accountability, and oversight in the Loop District, which suggests a mentoring program exists in name only.

Additionally, based on informal conversations with past novices and mentors and analysis of district documents regarding mentoring, it was apparent that the expectations set forth by the state were not being met, and, therefore, the district was not reaping the benefits of a valuable mentoring program.

Training Mentors

Although mentor trainings and manuals were produced by the Loop District, a lack of supervision and accountability resulted in a haphazard mentoring experience for novices. Based on a review of the district's mentoring documents, such as a mentor training guide last updated in 2006, former mentors' notes from trainings, and the district's website, it appears that the district offered three different mentor training programs in the past 10 years. Despite the fact that veteran teachers requested follow-up resources, no additional support or updated training was offered for current mentors. In 2006, two teachers selected by the district attended mentor training at Kean University after which they relayed the information that they had learned on mentoring to their Loop staff members. Attendance was mandatory for all potential mentors during the turnkey professional development session provided by the two trained Loop teachers. An examination of the mentor training manual, produced by faculty at Kean University and used at that training, indicated that it addressed the topics suggested by NJDOE; for example, "Learning by Doing" was the underlying theme throughout the manual and the participants engaged in a variety of activities related to adult learning and communication skills during the five hour training session.

During that training, the aforementioned manual was given to mentors, but they were not held accountable for implementing "best practices" as described in it. In addition to providing the training manual, the district produced a document, "Teaching Mentoring Program," which

was distributed there as well. This document articulates the purpose and goals of mentoring and the criteria for the selection of effective mentors. It reaffirms information covered during the training and lists the roles of the school-based mentoring team (principal or supervisor, and the mentor of each novice teacher) and mentoring committee (superintendent, the local professional development committee, and the association president or designees) in the district. The team and committee are supposed to be a source of guidance for the district to develop and maintain the Loop Teacher Mentoring Program, in compliance with New Jersey rules and regulations. After reading the existing manual and the program description, it seemed clear to me, however, that the district was not following its proposed plan or meeting its goals for mentoring.

Although this training occurred in 2006, the district is still lacking a concrete plan regarding mentoring. The district further lacks appropriate guidance and statements of expectations and standards for mentoring. Mentoring guides and books have not been updated in six years, and support services have neither been improved to meet the needs of today's novices nor are they based on current research. Improvements and updates of services need to be provided to effectively mentor new teachers. Although training manuals were created and a mentoring team designated, the district has failed to make the plans concrete for staff members. Therefore, without the proper structures in place, the district gave the impression that no substantive mentoring program existed.

Mentor Role

Although mentors were trained and received manuals, the role of the mentor was not clearly defined in the district. In other words, teachers were unaware of what to do because they lacked documentation that stated and explained their roles. This is exemplified by mentor teachers who have approached me about how to log mentoring hours because they were not

given any forms or instructions for doing so by the district. The undefined mentor role and lack of accountability leaves the teachers guessing at and/or not completing the required services.

In fact, research claims that, from the beginning, districts need to clearly articulate the expectations regarding mentor duties and responsibilities (Barrera et al., 2010). Unfortunately, the lack of clarification regarding the mentoring process in the district left teachers with negative feelings and a desire to avoid doing the state-required work. The role defined in the training was unclear and the lack of follow-up from administration left the teachers acting independently and without guidance. Additionally, informal conversations with past mentors indicated significant inconsistency in the implementation and quality of the mentor role. For example, some mentioned the importance of observing their novices in the classroom, while others reported that they simply “left their door open” for novices and waited to be asked for help; however, sometimes this meant they were never approached by their novices. Along the same lines, based on my observations, the range of services provided by mentors differed depending on the nature of the relationship. Mentoring support varied from helping with classroom design and management, discussing problems and concerns, collaborating on instructional ideas, offering procedural advice to conversations or friendly discussions. Although the 20 hours were logged and the stipend was offered to mentors, the quality of mentoring varied greatly and was not standardized in the Loop School District.

Although the mentoring program existed “on paper” in the district, the amount of actual support novices received was questionable; for example, veteran teachers were assigned to novice teachers and paid for their duties, but the role was not supported or monitored, nor were they provided with guidelines or held accountable for acting as competent mentors. Mentor teachers received little or no feedback or tangible information on whether they were actually

helping the novice teachers to whom they were assigned. This contradicts best practice research which finds that mentors should be offered frequent opportunities to express concerns and receive feedback on their performance. Since mentoring activities can vary daily and differ from teacher to teacher, evaluating and refining the process through frequent feedback is needed for lasting change (Boreen et al., 2009).

Without accountability or feedback, the required 20 hours of mentoring may have been documented, but there was sometimes little to no mentoring activities actually taking place. This is likely due to little or no oversight of the program at the district level. No one checked up on mentors because no district staff person was assigned to do so. It was simply left up to the mentors to contact the novice, plan an initial meeting, and then take the relationship wherever they wanted. Yet, research indicates that successful mentoring programs provide orientations and staff development for both mentor and novice teachers (Barrera et al., 2010).

Administrative Responsibilities in a Mentoring Program

Administrators need a definitive role stated by the district and made clear to all staff. Administrators such as principals should check mentoring plans, hold dyads (mentor and novice who are matched for mentoring) accountable for meeting hours, select mentors, and match them to novices. If districts do not clearly define the administrator's role in mentoring, it may leave uncertainty causing them to be inactive in the mentoring process.

Role

The Loop District administrators are responsible for working with the local Professional Development Committee to develop a mentoring plan, which can provide new teacher mentoring that is consistent with state regulations (NJDOE, 2008). Administration should develop plans that show evidence that mentors have the potential to accelerate the learning of novice teachers,

guide conversations with the novice on classroom practice aligned with the Professional Standards for Teachers, and develop collegial relationships with the novice teacher focused on trust and confidentiality (NJDOE, 2008). In other words, district plans should indicate a structure that can “provide a rigorous mentoring process for novice teachers.” The NJDOE requires that the effectiveness of the mentoring plan be reported through the district Quality Assurance Annual Report. The Loop administration has only loosely followed the state guidelines for mentoring plans and mentoring program implementation, by requiring only that mentors and novices sign documents stating that they have met for the required minimum of 20 hours.

Not only should an administrator be responsible for overseeing mentoring plans, but he or she should be an active and ongoing supporter of the mentoring process. This support includes being an instructional leader (Datnow & Castellano, 2001) in the guidance and development of new teachers; however, besides assigning mentors to novices, no other support or active role appeared to exist in the Loop District. The lack of formal support may have occurred largely because principals were not directed by the district to be involved in any other capacity. When the role is not defined, an administrator may be nonexistent or act in an inappropriate manner, without realizing the wrongdoing; for example, a veteran Pre-K teacher made clear that administrators tended to be absent when it came to overseeing the mentoring program when she said,

Absolutely, I think administration should be a part of mentoring, [but] I think they don't step in enough. They just leave it to our own accord and don't really follow up except for their part of it, which is just doing their observations of that person. But they really should be sitting in on some of those [mentoring] meetings, I think, to collaborate (L.Z, personal communication, April 5, 2011).

Another example to illustrate the need for a clearly defined role occurred when some mentors reported that administrators had asked them about the novices' weaknesses. This placed the mentors in an awkward position because it is important for mentors not to take on an evaluative role. Mentors should be available to offer assistance and support for the novice, not evaluate them (Weaver & Stanulis, 1996); however, the principal could be short-circuiting this relationship by asking the mentors to provide evaluative information. To my knowledge, when asked about their novices' performance, mentors felt uncomfortable and did not offer the principals this information. Perhaps administrators are unsure about their part in the process, suggesting it is imperative to the success of the mentoring program that administration takes an active and supportive role that is clearly defined.

Matching Dyads

The administrators in the Loop District do not always abide by what research states as the best practices for matching mentor and novice teachers. The factors in a mentoring program most related to reducing teacher turnover are novices having a mentor in the same field as them, common planning time allotted for the dyads, and regularly scheduled collaboration with the mentor (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The research also points to the importance of selecting mentors and matching dyads based on a rationale, such as same grade level or close classroom location (Barrera et al., 2010); however, in the Loop District, it was evident that principals assigned mentors based on teaching experience and availability, but they did not take into account grade level or even building location. For example, in the past, traveling teachers, such as music or physical education teachers, were paired with first grade teachers who were not always in the same school as them on a regular basis. Another example is a third grade teacher mentor who was matched with kindergarten, first grade, and fifth grade novices because, for a

long time, she was the only trained mentor in School Three. Consequently, the failure of the Loop District to have a stated rationale for matching mentors with novices hindered the effectiveness of mentoring according to research findings.

Furthermore, staff at Loop School Three, have approached me to discuss their experiences with mentoring, since they became aware of my research project. Some of their comments to me only reinforce the necessity of a structured mentoring program with clearly defined goals. For instance, a few novice teachers told me they never received a mentor, which points to the possibility that no one is checking the mentoring program paperwork or properly logging the hours of when mentors and novices meet. These teachers were not general education classroom teachers, so perhaps it was unclear which administrator was supposed to provide them with mentors. Other novice teachers reported having had two different mentors during their first year of teaching because they started mid school year in one school and then transferred to School Three the following year. One of these first year teachers was a maternity replacement, while the other was a long-term substitute, thus, demonstrating again that implementation of the mentoring process was haphazard and unclear to the school staff, including the administration, which highlighted the need for this study.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Since there was no systematic approach to or clearly articulated set of expectations for mentoring in School Three, and the only required documentation was mentor and novice signatures attesting to the completion of required hours, it was questionable if the Loop School District was actually meeting the state requirements. Teachers' perceptions imply that, even if they were being met "on paper," it was tacitly understood by staff that the quantity and quality of

mentoring experiences varied greatly for the novice teachers in the District causing potential inadequacies in the induction process.

Given what is known about the positive impact of research-based mentoring programs, it is imperative that the District improve its' current induction program in order to retain more teachers and improve the instructional skill of novice teachers. In the Loop School District, it is critical to utilize the expertise of long-time teachers in an effective mentoring program because it is struggling to make adequate yearly progress on state accountability measures. A well-executed mentoring program could help make this possible. It could ensure that novice teachers receive the support they need to gain knowledge and expertise to become highly effective teachers. Highly effective teachers have been shown to have a significant positive impact on the academic performance of students, an improvement that is critical to the Loop District.

Research indicates that developing a systematic, research-based, clearly articulated mentoring program in the Loop School District may positively influence new teacher retention and improve student outcomes. The purpose of this formative evaluation project was to develop and then study the implementation of a structured mentoring model based on best practice research and teacher input. The study focused on the mentoring that new teachers received and mentors and novices' perceptions of the program. Doing this kind of formative research was valuable because it furnished information to guide improvement (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). This research identified the strengths and weaknesses of the new mentoring program and how it was implemented in the school; furthermore, it yielded recommendations for improved design and implementation in the future. Research questions guiding this evaluation were: How do the mentors and novices perceive a new research-based mentoring program? How do they use the program? What influences their implementation of the mentoring program?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is the underlying structure or frame of a study (Merriam, 2009). I used concepts of educational change theory as the theoretical framework to inform this study. As a teacher in the Loop district, I recognized the need for change regarding the mentoring process and took concepts from Fullan's model both to guide me as I initiated this needed change and as I analyzed the results of doing so. According to Fullan (2007), an overview of the change process includes three phases: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. I attempted to follow this model to record what happens during the implementation of a research-based mentoring program. In order to gain support and buy-in from district stakeholders, I discussed the purpose and design of my study. While implementing the changes to the mentoring program, I followed many concepts that Fullan suggested, such as staying in touch with the participants throughout the process to help them as needed because too often top-down initiatives with little guidance on how to implement them leave staff frustrated and unwilling to comply (Fullan, 2001). Although my research-based mentoring program has not been fully institutionalized, the findings from the implementation stage as well as Fullan's concepts offered many implications for practice that could lead to institutionalization.

Initiation is the process that leads up to and includes a decision to adopt or proceed with a change (Fullan, 2007). Numerous educational innovations exist, as do the number of types of advocates that promote them (Fullan, 2007). Fullan identified one type as teacher advocates, a group that tends to have less access to resources; therefore, teacher driven innovations are generally initiated on an individual or smaller scale. Because I initiated this mentoring program as a teacher, it has many commonalities with what Fullan (2007) defined as teacher advocacy. Fullan (2007) suggested many teachers are willing to adopt change at the classroom level under

the right conditions; however, the change needs to be an innovation that is clear and practical, is supported by district administration and the building principal as well as the union, provides opportunities to interact with other teachers, and has outside resources.

Before embarking on a new initiative, the staff involved should be made aware of the reasons and goals for the organizational change and the extent to which they will be engaged in the process (Supovitz & Weinbaum, 2008) as a way to gain buy-in. Fullan's (2001) change theory suggests that gaining a strong sense of purpose from all stakeholders affected by the change process and making people feel a part of the initiative will inspire them to work towards common goals (Fullan, 2001). In addition, securing school board support and building a good rapport with the community, including school parents, may decrease conflict to aid in change effort (Fullan, 2007).

The second stage, implementation, is attempting to initiate change by putting a new idea, program, or set of activities and structures into practice (Fullan, 2007). Leaders need to provide a certain amount of support to facilitate implementation of a change effort and maintain that support throughout the entire process. Another important element of the implementation stage is sharing successes in progress toward the intended goals due to the change effort with the staff. An effective leader plans for small, early wins to demonstrate that the change goal is feasible and results are beneficial for those involved. As the implementation stage continues, the leader should proceed to report larger successes regarding the initiative. In demonstrating accomplishments by sharing data that provides evidence, it is easier for leaders to build support for the program (Spiro, 2011).

The third stage in the change process, institutionalization, involves the long-term staying power of the change effort. Incoming staff often do not understand new programs underway or

dismiss them because they are not given the proper information regarding them. It is important to share the rationale and research behind recent programs so that new staff is onboard and has shared beliefs with staff that has been involved since the early stages of the change effort (Spiro, 2011). Sustaining any change takes commitment from various staff members for it to be effective.

Ongoing feedback is another essential strategy to support institutionalization. The leader should analyze the change process and make revisions continuously as needed (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Spiro, 2011). Fullan (2001) suggested that having an advisory group of participants who value the initiative and share successes with colleagues to assist with this process may decrease resistance and increase teacher buy-in through shared ownership. Additionally, evaluation can play an important role in distinguishing the core elements that a program is required to have in order to be successful. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will help determine which elements are most important for the successful outcomes to date. Being mindful of funding and resources at the start of the initiative and throughout the process will also be imperative to sustaining change. Institutionalizing organizational change is not instantaneous but a process that requires gathering evidence, determining what is needed, and communicating with all staff frequently.

Overview of the Dissertation

The upcoming chapter is a review of literature regarding best practices of mentoring and contributing components, which provide reasons for a research-based mentoring program. That information along with the statement of the problem set the purpose for why I wanted to initiate change. A plan for implementation follows the literature. In chapter three, I report the methods and data collection strategies used in this research study. After the methodology is described, I report the findings in chapter four, which provide the strengths and weaknesses of the

implementation stage. Lastly, in chapter five I discuss the implications for practice regarding implementation of an effective mentoring program. In chapter five, I also describe some district level changes to the mentoring program which were influenced by this study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Teacher turnover rates are prominent. Compounding the difficulty, districts in high-poverty areas of New Jersey, including the Loop District, experience staff shortages across all teaching categories (Jandoli, 2013); however, a strong mentoring program can increase teacher retention and attract highly qualified professionals (Ravitch, 2010). A challenge is to assist new teachers to grow in confidence along with experience, and give them support as a way to help them maintain their career (Jandoli, 2013). This finding suggests that the mentoring process needs to be altered in the Loop School District to include specific guidelines that are research-based to improve new teacher retention rates and prepare teachers for working effectively with all students. This literature review is designed to communicate appropriate elements of a new teacher mentoring program that have the potential to positively impact retention and teacher quality in districts.

There are many benefits of effective induction programs that include mentoring support for novice teachers; for example, beginning teachers who participate in an induction program have higher job satisfaction, commitment, and retention rates (Ingersoll & Strong, 2004). Ingersoll and Strong (2004) critically reviewed 15 empirical studies, conducted since the mid 1980s, on the effects of support, guidance, and orientation programs for beginning teachers. Although the studies employed various research designs, they all focused on the outcomes of novice teacher programs. Ingersoll and Strong (2004) identified three broad categories of outcomes related to teachers' job satisfaction, commitment, retention, and turnover; teachers' classroom teaching practices and pedagogical methods; and student achievement. Ingersoll and Strong are well-known and respected researchers on teacher induction and mentoring and will be cited often throughout this review of literature. Research suggests that mentoring, a key

instrument of new teacher induction, involves practices used to help beginning teachers become competent and effective professionals in the classroom. Through designing, initiating, and studying the implementation of a research-based mentoring program, I intended to devise a set of implications for a systematic approach to mentoring that can be used in my district to better support new teachers.

There are many different ways to define mentoring and the mentor role; however, Boreen et al., (2009) provided a helpful road map to the basic concepts and processes of mentoring in their book, *Mentoring Beginning Teacher*. This literature review and research study draw on examples and principles primarily from their work. As Boreen and colleagues' work is an accredited resource with substantive information grounded in empirical research and practical experience. The authors' text based on a philosophy that advocates listening, questioning, and collaborating as critical elements of mentoring teachers. The authors have studied numerous mentors in public schools and the information provided is developed from their own mentoring experiences as well as research they conducted. Boreen et al., (2009) offered straightforward advice for schools regarding mentoring and practical implications for best practice. In addition, Barrera et al., (2010) investigated the views of mentor teachers concerning essential components in a mentoring program. Although highly subjective, the mentors in this study offered valuable implications for a mentoring program regarding goals, administration, and resources. Additional works are cited in this literature review for supplementary information regarding specific cases, studies, and detailed areas of mentoring or teacher preparation.

Research on new teacher mentoring programs that informed the design of this program are grouped in this dissertation as four relevant topics: defining mentoring and mentor, key

components of an effective mentoring program, the goals and benefits of an effective mentoring program, and, lastly, implementation challenges.

Defining Mentoring and Mentor

Beginning teachers need support and guidance to acquire the skills to be successful in a long lasting teaching career. According to Elmore (2003), “*Some* educators know what to do; *most* don’t. *Some* [novice teachers] are able to learn what to do on their own; *most* are not” (p. 28). This assertion points out why all schools need to implement a mentoring program with strong support from veteran teachers to guide novice teachers in the right direction and to increase the effectiveness of the education system. A substantial body of evidence indicates that teachers who lack adequate initial preparation are more likely to leave the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In an effort to address this gap, schools need a support system for beginning teachers in order for them to become fully competent professionals. It is rare that teachers can learn in isolation to be successful, so implementing a mentoring program with collaboration helps improve performance. Without structures in place to support collaboration during the mentoring process, the exchanges between a mentor and novice may not meet the goals intended. For example, collaborative efforts in a mentoring program should limit solitary struggles of the novice teachers by allowing them to discuss concerns about practice in a non-threatening manner. Researchers also suggest that the more training new teachers receive, the more likely they are to stay in the field (Darling-Hammond, 2003). According to Darling-Hammond, (2003) “Schools can enhance the beneficial effects of strong initial preparation with strong induction and mentoring in the first years of teaching” (p. 4). Novice teachers need a mentoring program and an assigned mentor to grow as professionals.

Mentoring

Current induction programs for new teachers often lack concentrated, sustained support, which contributes to a high attrition rate (Shernoff, Marinez-Lora, Frazier, Jakobsons, Atkins, & Bonner, 2011). Shernoff et al. (2011) researched novice teachers working in urban settings and the common obstacles they face when starting their careers. The authors were concerned with how schools could provide protective factors to help these teachers thrive rather than fail during their first year. This three-year mixed methods study responds to the unique needs of each school context but seems adaptable in content and structure to additional schools' norms and goals. Mentoring is one strategy for providing the support novices require. Mentoring is the establishment of a formal relationship, provided and arranged by the district, between one novice and one experienced teacher that offers the novice various kinds of assistance (Washburn-Moses, 2010). Successful mentoring includes co-planning, observing each other's teaching, and mutually improving teacher quality (Washburn-Moses, 2010). Using these strategies, novices can learn from veteran teachers as they perform their jobs and participate in school activities. Recently, the personal guidance offered by mentors as seasoned veterans to beginning teachers in schools has become the primary form of teacher induction (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Because of its growing popularity, novice teachers often expect to be matched with a mentor upon hire. Mentoring sets up an intentional relationship between two teachers and provides them with structured opportunities to grow professionally. The quality of this interaction is extremely important because relationships formed through mentoring can affect the course of a career (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998). Since teacher preparation (college courses or pre-employment) is rarely sufficient to provide the knowledge and skill necessary to be an effective teacher, a significant portion of professional knowledge needs to be acquired on the job (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Therefore, schools frequently provide a program to foster growth on the part of

the newcomer or weed out those who are ill-suited for the job (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In sum, mentoring can provide numerous benefits for teachers and make-up for the additional preparation needed beyond what happens prior to employment to become effective teachers.

Typically mentors directly or indirectly provide help to beginning teachers (Dangel, 2006); however, mentoring programs can vary in many ways. They may range from a single meeting between mentor and novice at the beginning of the year to a highly structured program involving frequent meetings over a couple of years (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). When mentoring programs are concretely outlined with guidelines, made clear to all staff members, the experience for both teachers seems more beneficial (Johnson, Birkeland, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu, and Peske, 2001). However, when structures are not in place to support mentoring or the roles are ill-defined then the mentor may function as simply a dispenser of information with no collaboration or support for the novice (Johnson et al., 2001). Yet, in some cases the mentoring relationship looks like a parent-child relationship in which the mentor “mothers” the novice (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998). For example, the mentor helps the novice feel comfortable and takes care of him or her in the new environment, most of which occurs during the beginning of the school year. In other situations, novices have reported receiving little guidance about teaching and have had to piece together their understanding of what content to teach and the materials needed to do so (Johnson et al., 2001). Since the type of relationship between the mentor and the novice matters greatly, it can affect the experience for both teachers. Although there are similar definitions of mentoring, the details of implementation influence its effectiveness.

Mentors

In addition to numerous ways of enacting mentoring, the approaches districts take when defining the mentor role vary as well. This is key because mentor teachers influence the

mentoring process in a variety of ways. Precise expectations and accountability of mentors along with extensive training should be ongoing (Boreen et al., 2009) and made apparent to all staff members before the school year begins. Once they are selected, based on specific criteria, mentors should have a specific role with clearly defined responsibilities.

Selection. Generally, mentors are chosen to serve as hosts and colleagues to the novices primarily on the basis of their expertise and success as teachers. Boreen et al. (2009) recommended that mentors have at least three to five years of teaching experience. This recommendation is based on the importance of the novice viewing the mentor as a veteran, not a peer (Boreen et al., 2009). Experienced teachers as advice givers are suggested because less seasoned colleagues may be viewed as not having the knowledge that novices need. In addition, mentors are selected for their knowledge and skill with regard to content, pedagogy, and the ability to coach and work with other teachers (Boreen et al., 2009).

Furthermore, two important qualities for mentors to have are reflectiveness and the ability to encourage dialogue about practice. Exemplary mentor educators are those who consider their progress in the classroom, ponder effective teaching strategies, devise creative classroom activities, and practice reflection to set personal and professional goals (Boreen et al., 2009). Other important attributes that effective mentors possess include emotional availability and the capacity to invest appropriately in novice teachers' growth and critical thinking (Young, Bullough, Draper, Smith, & Erickson, 2005). Young et al. (2005) conducted qualitative research to study the patterns in relationships and interactions between mentor and novice teachers. Their findings indicated that mentors have preferred approaches or models to mentoring. During data analysis, mentoring patterns were analyzed to suggest a fundamental implication for mentor selection. For instance, novice teachers require a commitment from veteran teachers to support

them both emotionally and intellectually (Young et al., 2005). Additional qualities of effective mentors include the following: flexibility, collegiality, significant time spent in school under close supervision, and knowledge about how to monitor and assess children's progress (Booth, Furlong, & Wilkin, 1990; Boreen et al., 2009). Identifying these attributes in teachers when selecting mentors is imperative because if there are no standards for selection, and less capable teachers are chosen, the novice teachers may suffer. Mentors need to uphold these standards and demonstrate them to their novices. In so doing, they will instill an ethos of high quality teaching in the next generation of teachers. When selecting potential mentors, certain traits should be considered, including professional and interpersonal skills of a teacher, dedicated years of practice, and the capability to demonstrate for a novice. Once mentors are selected, professional development is necessary but there is little research that documents best practices specifically for this purpose. Presumably, what we know about best practices in professional development generally would apply to this context of training mentors as well.

Role. The role of mentor can be defined in different ways, but the overall goal is to provide support to new teachers. Mentor teachers have the complex task of helping a novice teacher negotiate his or her way into the school culture, balancing this with giving support in ways to teach effectively in a specific content area. In addition, mentors support novices as they learn the school expectations regarding curriculum without trying to shape their beliefs or discourage them from developing their own style of teaching (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998). Also, veteran teachers need to be aware of the difficulties of mentoring relationships and balance the responsibilities of providing both emotional and intellectual support in order to mentor successfully (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998). In addition, being positive, poised, and professional by explaining the expectations, describing the hopes, and being frank but tactful when questioned

(Boreen et al., 2009) about the district is critical. Therefore mentors must take the time in advance to assess personal feelings about their school system in order to be prepared to discuss the school environment with novices. In sum, aiding the novices in acclimating to the school culture and teaching content are two distinct roles of mentors. No matter how the role is defined by the district, specific factors are essential to the mentor in carrying out his or her duties effectively.

Key Components of an Effective Mentoring Program

Preparation, collaboration, and observation are instrumental components in creating a successful mentoring program. These research-based elements add value to the process.

Preparation

Preparation is an important part of an effective mentoring program and occurs in various domains. A school preparing for mentoring, can be divided into the following levels: district/school, mentor, dyad, and administrative. Once the district and school have prepared for the mentoring program, preparation at other levels can add to the likelihood of its success.

District and school level preparation. Before the school year begins various elements of preparation at the district and school levels need to be in place in order for the mentoring program to be beneficial. In a successful mentoring program, clearly articulated goals are provided in the beginning of the year along with the potential benefits to both new and experienced teachers. According to Boreen et al. (2009), recommendations for improving mentoring include: providing structured time and incentives for mentors such as stipends, extra planning time, professional credits, or career advancement. Additionally, putting together a “beginning teacher” packet that includes the following: a map of the school; tips on parent/teacher conferences; location of equipment with rules of usage; and information on school

regulations and policies, can help the novice feel more positive about the upcoming school year (Boreen et al., 2009). Districts should establish a rationale for pairing mentors and novices based upon research and consideration of specific characteristics. Some best practices in matching mentors and novices include pairing new and experienced teachers that have the same or a closely related certification, providing them with common planning time in their schedules, reducing workload for novices, placing them in classroom locations in close proximity to their mentor, and providing orientations about the mentoring program for both teachers (Barrera et al., 2010; Mullen, 2011). Numerous reasons exist behind these matching suggestions; for example, mentors matched with novices teaching the same grade level and or content area allows the mentor to provide more content specific assistance (Boreen et al., 2009). Similarly, when classrooms of novices and mentors are located close to each other, it increases opportunities for more informal conversations between classes, or before and after school (Boreen et al., 2009). These preparatory steps taken before the school year begins can help create a successful start to the mentoring relationship at the school and district levels.

Mentor preparation. Districts can take certain preliminary steps to jumpstart the mentoring process but mentors must prepare as well. Initially, mentors can help beginning teachers navigate the school environment and culture by introducing them to staff members, modeling respect for administration, and following school procedures (Boreen et al., 2009). In addition, introducing the novices to faculty and helping them learn their names may help ease the transition into the workplace. Along the same lines, sharing supplies and materials the novice may need, or even helping stock his/her classroom will help acclimate the beginning teacher. Helping novices with this initial preparation will help ease their first day by reducing the number of details to worry about. Also, showing novices lesson examples and sharing supplies provides

them with concrete resources for the start of the school year. This early preparation can help novices feel welcomed as fellow professionals and team participants who will contribute to the effectiveness of the school (Boreen et al., 2009).

Dyad preparation. Once the district matches the mentor and novice, the dyad needs to plan and prepare for a successful mentoring experience. Ideally, the mentoring relationship should begin before the school year starts, in order to help the novice be prepared once the students arrive. Without this planning and preparation in advance, the mentoring relationship may be hindered. To put it bluntly, “For teachers working together in a mentoring relationship, planning is key, and realistic goals should be agreed upon at the outset” (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998, p.4). Researchers suggest that frequent dyad meetings are an important element of a successful mentoring program; therefore, the mentor and novice should plan with optimistic expectations of frequency. However, when the reality of time dedicated to other parts of the teachers’ lives is taken into consideration, the original schedule may need to be altered and the dyads should be ready for this occurrence. With that said, it is important to have realistic expectations about length and frequency of meetings so that the teachers do not get discouraged or have feelings of failure and disappointment when scheduled meeting times are altered (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998). In addition to planning frequency and length of meetings, at the beginning of the school year, the mentor and novice should plan what type of interactions they will have, such as classroom observations that have the potential to be educative experiences (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998). Proactive planning is critical to the success of less-experienced teachers (Boreen et al., 2009) and the dyads because it sets up an intentional and consistent support system. Novices will need multiple means of support throughout their first year of teaching so it is imperative that the mentors take a proactive approach when planning the

upcoming mentoring process as a dyad. In fact, dyads should remember the old saying, “When we fail to plan, we plan to fail” and use this as a reminder of the significance of planning.

Administrative preparation. Administrative support plays a key role in the success of a mentoring program. “To a large extent, the relationship created between the mentor and the person being mentored is dependent on the quality of school administrator support” (Boreen et al., 2009, p.137). Without administrative support, it would be difficult for the mentoring process to achieve optimal benefits. Mentors and the school administration frequently share the same fundamental goals of improving instruction and increasing student learning (Boreen et al., 2009) and these goals are shared and developed in new teachers. Although goals are shared, the principal is the person in the position to shape the organizational conditions necessary for success of all kinds (Fullan, 2007), including mentoring. Both stakeholders work with beginning teachers to develop their classroom styles and instructional strategies, but principals and mentors play different roles in this process (Boreen et al., 2009). Each has distinct district roles and responsibilities established prior to mentoring. The relationship with the school administrator is critical in the newcomer's professional life because the administrators evaluate, discipline, oversee, and if need be, terminate teachers. In contrast, the mentors' role focuses on improving instruction while developing collegial relationships (Boreen et al., 2009). This suggests the importance of the administration ensuring that the mentor's role is established as non- evaluative so that a trusting relationship can be built between the dyad (Boreen et al., 2009). In addition, the “triangle” of communication is avoided: the mentor should not serve as a filter, buffer, or reinforcement between administration and the novice. From the beginning, novices should be encouraged to speak directly with administration rather than using the mentor as a messenger, and vice versa. In order to create appropriate lines of communication and avoid the mentor

being in the middle, novices and administrators are encouraged to meet face-to-face to discuss policies, concerns, and evaluations (Boreen et al., 2009). Setting guidelines for the mentors' and administrators' roles before the school year starts can help focus both parties on contributing in the most optimal and appropriate way to service the novices. Throughout the school year, principals' actions serve to legitimize whether initiatives are to be taken seriously and to support teachers both psychologically and with resources (Fullan, 2007). The administration therefore sets the tone for the mentoring program by defining the teachers' role, preparing resources in advance, and addressing their responsibilities in the process.

Once a district adequately prepares for the program and matches dyads, certain components integrated with practice and theoretical reflection put in place will enhance the experience. The Loop District was not providing mentoring pairs with structured meeting times and expectations or opportunities for observation with follow up time for critical reflection which aid in effective mentoring. In the next two subsections, I outline why and how these two components should be incorporated into a mentoring program.

Collaboration through Structured Mentoring Meetings

Teachers can build their craft and improve their practice by communicating with colleagues. Collaboration and socialization are important components of teacher development. Therefore, incorporating them as part of the mentoring process can contribute to novice progress. Providing a framework for teacher collaboration and inquiry can help create a shared vision of good teaching amongst staff, an image of how beginning teachers learn, and a repertoire of mentoring strategies and skills (Stanulis & Ames, 2009). Mentoring meetings provide time for novices and mentors to collaborate, but without enacting appropriate guidelines, the meetings could have little to no value. Having a regularly scheduled time for thoughtful conversation and

establishing a collegial relationship by conferring, questioning, mirroring, and reflecting makes the mentoring relationship enriching (Boreen et al., 2009).

Need for collaboration. Research has indicated that professional development should promote strong communication skills, establish respectful and productive relationships, and use reflective practices (NJPS, 2004). Therefore, a mentoring program with collaborative components is a way to incorporate these strategies, improve attitudes, and decrease teacher isolation which are all critical components in retaining new teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In order to implement these ideas, trusting relationships need to be created and kindled through collaborative endeavors. According to Shernoff et al. (2011),

Social relationships are crucial for novices not only because they are a conduit for building skills that lead to effectiveness, but because connections with colleagues foster a sense of belongingness within the workplace necessary to engender longer-term commitment to teaching. (p. 468)

Fostering communication among staff members through a mentoring program can have benefits for a school district where individuals feel supported and safe with a commitment to constructive engagement with others (Young et al., 2005). Dialogue is rarely thought of as a tool; yet, dialogue is an effective way to deepen the understanding of classroom practice (Boreen et al., 2009) and needs to be integrated into mentoring meetings. When dyads integrate these approaches into their meetings, it is the hope these collaborative efforts will be sustained and more teachers will be apt to incorporate these strategies.

Given that new teachers often describe their work as solitary with few opportunities to reflect on instruction, co-teach, or plan lessons with colleagues, collaboration can aid a mentoring program (Shernoff et al., 2011). Since many new teachers often feel “lost at sea,” isolation can leave them struggling with problems privately rather than collaborating or getting support from colleagues to help address them (Shernoff et al., 2011). Novices may be fearful to

approach staff members with concerns, and therefore, a mentoring program should be based on collaboration that creates an atmosphere for teachers to talk in meaningful ways. After all, new teachers are more likely to remain in teaching when they experience frequent interactions among faculty and perceive that there is a shared responsibility for student learning and school improvement (Shernoff et al., 2011). Therefore, when mentoring programs incorporate collaboration between mentors and novices they can ease the potential fears, difficulties, or hurdles of new teachers. When the relationship between a mentor and a novice teacher is based on mutual respect and trust, both may then wish to continue discussing their craft after the official mentoring duties are completed. This continued contact can provide some of their richest collegial interactions (Boreen et al., 2009) and lead to long-term benefits for a school. The nature of relationships among the staff in a school, more than anything else, influences the character and quality of that school and student accomplishment (Barth, 2006); therefore, successful mentor and novice relationships can enrich the school's collegial culture, in which professionals talk about practice, share their craft as well as knowledge, and observe and root for the success of one another (Barth, 2006). School improvement is more likely and thoroughly achieved when teachers engage in frequent, continuous, and precise talk about teaching practice while avoiding conversations about student failings and their personal lives (Fullan, 2007). Meetings between mentors and novices that encourage structured collaboration can enhance the learning and growth of both teachers and limit isolation.

Purposeful communication used in mentoring helps the novices understand learning and teaching strategies better; this can be established through scheduled meetings. During these meetings, veterans and novices may create new understandings through meaningful dialogue about practice, based on specific recommendations written in a mentoring policy.

Administrative role in collaboration. Establishing a community of inquiry centered on teacher growth must be cultivated by the school administration (Young et al., 2005). As such, administration plays a key role in the collaboration that takes place between mentor and novice teachers. For a mentoring relationship to be successful, ample time is needed to work with beginning professionals in developing their teaching practice (Boreen et al., 2009). In order to facilitate collaboration during structured meetings, time must be allotted by the school administration for the two teachers to meet; however, Boreen et al., (2009) found that the most common problem in mentoring relationships is a lack of time for collegial conversations. When no set time is scheduled, the mentoring relationship and potential benefits are weakened. Allocating enough time for mentors is essential since their schedules are as frantic and full as the beginning teachers. These busy classroom professionals cannot simply find time during the day or after school to observe or talk with new colleagues. Typically, administrators create teachers' schedules and have the ability to allot time for mentors and novices to meet. Administrators occasionally hire substitutes to cover teachers' classrooms to allow time for mentoring purposes, but in order for mentors and novices to meet regularly, they usually have to meet during their prep times or lunch period. Granted, this assumes that they have common schedules, since this is not always the case, teachers must schedule time to meet other than during the work day (i.e., before or after school, weekends, evenings). To alleviate scheduling conflicts, Boreen et al., (2009) suggest that it would be beneficial to designate time for mentoring during in-service days. Given that a certain number of in-service days are required by the District, neither teacher would be losing personal time when they meet. If mentoring meetings, based on collaboration are to be incorporated successfully into a school, the administration must be supportive and active in scheduling them.

Suggestions for collaboration during mentoring meetings. In public educational settings today, teachers need to focus not only on academics but also on developing skills to educate the student into becoming a caring and compassionate citizen (Lee, n.d.). Teachers can enhance students' education by collaborating and communicating about practice. Although there are many how-to lists to draw from when creating recommendations for collaboration, similarities exist and certain suggestions should be implemented during mentoring meetings. Mentoring dyads can adhere to the following recommendations in their meeting or create their own lists of "norms" to aid in structure. In an article written by DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008), popular researchers of Professional Learning Communities, it suggests team norms be established to guide members in working together. According to DuFour et al., (2008), norms help teachers clarify expectations regarding how they will work together and share goals. An essential piece to a mentor and novice embarking on a successful collaborative relationship would be setting norms before their meetings begin.

Hwa Lee (n.d.) developed a set of guidelines for successful collaboration amongst teachers. The guidelines include the following:

1. Use knowledge to support your viewpoint. Have facts to support your opinion.
2. Understand there are many "right" answers for addressing student learning and behavior. Be open to others perspectives.
3. Develop effective strategies for listening. Listen with a purpose and retain the information to be able to engage in a conversation.
4. Avoid the temptation to offer advice immediately. Allow the teacher to finish his or her statement and reflect before speaking.

5. Focus your interactions on observable information. Do not make assumptions regarding the other's thoughts but base comments on facts.
6. Use collaborative language; that is, ask questions that encourage others to speak.
7. Monitor how much you talk. In conjunction with the previous step, do not have a one-sided conversation, both teachers are participating.
8. If you have a disagreement, address it as soon as possible and in a straightforward manner.

There are other researchers that have provided versions of best practices for collaboration.

Friend and Cook (1996) outline characteristics for collaboration which include:

1. Collaboration is voluntary.
2. Collaboration is based on individuals' contributions valued as equal.
3. Collaboration requires a shared goal.
4. Collaboration includes shared responsibility for decision making.
5. Collaboration includes shared accountability.
6. Collaboration is based on shared resources
7. True collaboration emerges as teachers are more experienced at collaboration.

In sum, a variety of guidelines regarding collaboration have been produced to aid in teachers working together. A novice and mentor teacher may compile their own list that matches their personalities; however, based on research, certain components should be included. The dyad should include the following components: effective listening skills, utilizing facts not assumptions about others' perspectives, monitoring how much one is talking, and sharing resources, responsibility, and outcomes as a dyad. This process may be trial-and-error until the right recipe for collaboration is created for each dyad.

Approaches to mentoring meetings. There are a variety of collaborative approaches. Mentoring meetings may follow any of the proposed structures to heighten the experience. The range of approaches varies from responding directly to the novices' concerns, engaging in joint inquiry, self-disclosing by the mentor, to rejecting the novices view. An induction program should provide mentors and novices time to talk, collaborate, and explore content through communicating ideas (Stanulis & Ames, 2009). Various approaches to mentoring meetings can be effective in accomplishing those suggested behaviors. The following approaches are derived from research and will be addressed in the upcoming subsections: responsive; educative; mentor self-disclosing; and argumentative.

Responsive approach. A responsive mentor provides a novice with guidance in professional development and assistance in responding to immediate needs and concerns (Tauer, 1996). In a study conducted by Tauer (1996), successful relationships were characterized by sustained interaction between the two participants based on a structure the mentor teacher gave to the relationship. This specific structure caused the mentor to correspond to the needs, wants or expectations of the new partner. During regularly scheduled meetings, mentors addressed the perceived needs of novices. On one hand, mentors and novices who shared common understandings had success with this approach. On the other hand, in dyads that were unable to achieve successful relationships, teachers viewed their needs differently and lacked communication. Still, the *responsive* approach appeared to be viewed more favorably than unresponsive approaches by the novices. Although this qualitative study found that the ideal relationship cannot always be cultivated despite the effort of both teachers, findings suggest the importance of creating the optimal conditions for the dyad as to increase the potential for success (Tauer, 1996). Specifically the teachers' personalities, the structure of the program, and the

school environment influence the success of the relationship (Tauer, 1996). A responsive mentor looks almost exclusively to his or her novice for guidance and direction. In this situation, the novice sets the agenda through question posing, presenting problems, or expressing concerns for the mentor to consider (Young et al., 2005).

Educative approach. Unlike in the responsive approach, where the mentor strictly responds to the novice's needs, the educative approach asks both teachers to engage in joint inquiry. One way to increase collaboration is to implement an "educative" mentoring approach, which emphasizes the idea that beginning teachers should be in joint inquiry with their mentor to help the novice understand the importance of learning from practice (Stanulis & Ames, 2009). Novices generally want mentors who will take their daily dilemmas seriously, watch them teach and provide feedback, help them develop instructional strategies, model skilled teaching, and share insights about students' work and lives (Roberson & Roberson, 2009). With that being said, Stanulis and Ames (2009) conducted a study to examine how an experienced teacher learned to mentor by researching a training program for mentors. This program taught mentors the educative approach to not only be responsive to novices' needs but place an emphasis on developing a framework for asking them questions to consider new perspectives. This approach may cause the novice to step outside his or her comfort zone to consider new methods of teaching. Educative mentoring involves a shared vision of good teaching that gives the mentor an image of how novices learn to teach, a repertoire of mentoring strategies and skills, and adopting a stance as a learner. This approach to collaboration can be effective for both teachers while the teachers engage in joint inquiry over relevant topics and practice.

Mentor self-disclosing. Mentors may find it challenging to build trust or connect with their novice teachers, but expressing their vulnerability and sharing learning experiences with

them may help the relationship develop. When veteran teachers share information about problems they have worked through in the past, it can contribute to creating a trusting relationship. The mentor teacher can share recollections of his or her early days in teaching, but must be careful not to overwhelm the new colleague with too many “horror” stories (Boreen et al., 2009). Admitting that even experienced teachers fail, helps open the door for beginning teachers to be more forthcoming about their own challenges (Boreen et al., 2009). Mentors can recall what it was like to be a new colleague with no established reputation in the school, and help the novice understand that, just as he or she changed, adapted, and improved so will the novice teacher (Boreen et al., 2009). When mentors self-disclose areas in which they have improved from experience, it creates a context for sharing and learning. Additionally, it shows that the struggle to be a good teacher is an ongoing one that has to be continually worked on. In one study, a mentor teacher explained why it is beneficial to have a novice observe her class, to show a well-developed lesson plan fail when put into action and learn that even experience does not shield a teacher from problems (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998). When novices can see veteran teachers as vulnerable, it may deepen the respect they have for each other as teachers and open the door for more idea sharing and problem solving. In addition, it demonstrates the ongoing challenges of teaching which may ease the novices’ fear of not being perfect. Mentors need to feel comfortable sharing both the high and low points of everyday practice. When a mentor demonstrates his or her reflective process and the benefits associated with a critical disposition (Boreen et al., 2009), it may positively influence their relationship and the novices’ ability to share.

Argumentative approach. Rather than offering novices straightforward advice, mentors may ask indirect questions to prompt controversy or debate (Strong & Baron, 2004). When

mentors and novices disagree, it may promote dialogue and lead to growth for the novice. Strong and Baron (2004) studied the effect of feedback while researching how mentor teachers make pedagogical suggestions to beginning teachers during mentoring conversations and how beginning teachers respond. The authors analyzed sixty-four conversations between 16 veteran teacher mentors and their beginning teacher novices. They found that a response is more likely to be elaborated if the teacher rejects the mentor's suggestion than if the advice is immediately accepted; therefore, if the mentor is interested in engaging a teacher in discussion, suggesting an idea that is controversial or debatable may increase the dialogue between mentoring dyads. However, that is not the primary purpose of making suggestions; experienced mentors may simply be pointing out a useful teaching device to a novice teacher. Probing the novices' thinking about practice more deeply during longer sustained meetings and analyzing potential hindrances leads to a more enriching experience (Boreen et al., 2009). Beginning teachers will vary in their level of dependency or autonomy. Therefore a mentor must adapt to a specific teacher's needs. More dependent, less experienced teachers may need more direct pedagogical advice from their mentors, and may not benefit as much from techniques that rule out direct teaching and demand that the teachers come up with ideas independently (Strong & Baron, 2004). Mentors must adapt their approach depending on the novice but when appropriate consider disagreeing with the new teacher's point of view to heighten discussion.

Observation with Critical Reflection

In addition to creating a culture of collaboration through constructive mentoring meetings, observation (both observing and being observed) along with critical reflection on the process is viewed by researchers as a critical component to the success of mentoring programs (Boreen et al., 2009). As teachers develop, they learn from observing others. Doing so can help

them assess their own teaching methods for improvement relative to what they have seen.

Observation is imperative for a novice teacher who is cultivating his or her practice and striving to feel comfortable in the work environment. For this reason, “School districts that sponsor mentoring programs often provide release time for beginning colleagues to observe their mentors and other master teachers in action” (Boreen et al., 2009, p.58). Effective observation entails specific steps before, during and after the observed lesson.

Prior to observation. Important structures need to be in place for the observation to be non-threatening and valuable. Once the observations are scheduled, it is recommended that the dyads negotiate expectations for the observations. An observation can only be effective when the novice teacher and the experienced teacher have clear expectations about what they want to gain from the observation (Northwest Territory Teacher Induction, 2011). Conversation afterwards can be awkward if the pairs do not have established guidelines. Communication between the mentor and novice must be specific, clear, and shared. They should have components similar to a lesson plan structure that most teachers use clear objectives, activities, and evaluations with the potential to adjust the goals as needed (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998).

The establishment of trust between mentor and novice teacher is critical before the observation can occur (Strong & Baron, 2004). It is the mentor’s responsibility to establish rapport with the novice teacher and foster a welcoming partnership (Ganser, 1992). Fullan (2001) points out that utilizing team building exercises and promoting collaboration amongst colleagues can enhance the success of any reform, including mentoring. Creating opportunities for mentors and novices to interact and participate in activities that build trust are helpful before entering classrooms for observations. Districts may provide professional development opportunities to aid dyads in building trust and communication skills.

Without proper planning the observation component can easily be ignored or forgotten. In one study on mentoring, Stanulis and Weaver (1998) reported the importance of planning observations in advance as demonstrated by a mentor teacher. This yearlong study examined the relationship between a dyad and found the significance of planning. A mentor teacher reported that, while she was teaching, she often reflected on and wondered how she could talk to the novice teacher about a particular lesson or what the novice's thoughts would be if she were observing that lesson. Although, she thought an observation would not only provide support for a novice teacher but would also stimulate her own learning, no observations occurred. Unfortunately, she believed the novice teacher seemed uninterested in observing her (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998). Later, this veteran teacher stated that she wished she had been more explicit early in the year about scheduling mutual classroom visits with her assigned novice teacher. She assumed they would happen naturally while looking through lesson plan books. But without proper scheduling and preparation, they did not. Of course, both mentor and novice can gain from observing each other but without proper planning and resources the opportunity may be lost.

Many mentoring programs incorporate an observation component that requires planning of the observation lesson and reflection. The Northwest Territory Induction Program (2011) suggests that teachers meet beforehand to plan the observation and then meet afterwards to reflect on the experience. Specific protocols to enhance observation planning are listed by the National School Reform Faculty (n.d.). For example, during a pre-observation meeting, the novice should decide what he or she wants to learn more about while observing the mentor. Also, the teacher being observed can provide any resources necessary for the lesson. Setting a plan will help the observer stay focused when he or she observes the lesson. Not only can the

teaching observer learn from this experience, when planned appropriately, the teacher being observed can benefit. For example, the NSRF offers a protocol to deepen the “observed’s” understanding of practice. In this case, a pre-observation conference would consist of the teacher being observed outlining the lesson and setting an area of practice for the observer to focus on. After the observations are planned and scheduled, the actual observation can take place in the novice or mentor’s classrooms.

Observation. Novice teachers struggle with a variety of concepts their first year and observation can offer an opportunity for experiential learning. “Providing new teachers with opportunities to be observed and to observe other teachers, especially master teachers... helps novice teachers to begin to generate stores of experience needed to deal with the verities of teaching” (Roberson & Roberson, 2009, p.115). For example, it can be beneficial for novices to observe veteran teachers who have effective classroom management skills and discipline procedures. A focus in this area is important because teachers’ classroom management skills are related to student achievement; they impact the effectiveness of instruction and opportunities to learn (Shernoff et al., 2011). Novice teachers rank classroom management and student misbehavior as the most stressful, complex, and pressing issue leading to new teachers leaving their jobs (Shernoff et al., 2011); however, through observation, novices can see how veteran teachers handle classroom management and discipline procedures. Furthermore, this opportunity allows them to gain ideas about how to deal with a popular teaching challenge that is particularly common among new teachers. A strong induction program follows the philosophy that “seeing is believing” and being able to see a particular strategy in practice can be the best learning opportunity (Northwest Teaching Induction Program, 2011). Because novices may be apprehensive in the beginning, having them observe their mentor first can demonstrate a sense of

shared learning and mutual growth. On the one hand the mentor can model herself or himself as a learner seeking new ideas and feedback (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998) while on the other hand, the mentor could model best practice. Both options can be beneficial as long as the focus and type of observation is established during a pre-observation conference. Through first-hand experiences, novices can view valuable teaching strategies and methods in action, much needed as a beginning teacher.

Although research points to the value of novices observing mentors, evidence also shows that novices can improve their craft by allowing mentors to observe them teaching. In a study on the benefits of mentoring, a beginning teacher stated that it helped her greatly when her mentor teacher conducted “live assessments.” This is one approach of observing and assessing a teacher. It is based on state standards for the purpose of improving teaching and focuses on the clear expectations required by the state, allowing the novice to learn about components of good teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2003). After observations, veteran teachers can offer words of encouragement and constructive suggestions for improvement (Wong, 2002), in order to aid in the development of the novices’ craft.

As previously stated in this dissertation, there are many structures and approaches for conducting observations. Another approach is for the mentor to note general impressions during the lesson while sitting in an inconspicuous place in the classroom with a clear view of students and teacher. While observing, the mentor teacher can record what comes to mind as the activity unfolds and focus on one or two events, questions, or issues. Naturally, a mentor should not overload the novice teacher with random observations about things they are doing “wrong,” but have a balance of comments with positive statements regarding student and teacher performance as well as constructive suggestions for improvement. Discussion about the lesson should be

done as soon as possible; particularly, right after the observation with the intent of helping the novice set new goals for professional development (Boreen et al., 2009).

These approaches provide a range of techniques, which mentors and novices can implement in conducting observations in each other's classrooms. All provide a structure for the teachers to follow along with a reflection component, which is essential to making the experience worthwhile. The reflection takes place after the observation to provide a collaborative learning experience for the teachers.

Reflection after the observation. In order for observations to provide meaningful support for novice teachers, discussions, when feedback is offered from mentors, should take place after each observation. Novices and mentors should reflect on the mentor's lesson as well. These exchanges can facilitate the steady development of a novice to a veteran teacher (Roberson & Roberson, 2009). Novice teachers need to hear from positive, invested, experienced teachers, who can provide needed help regarding their performance in the classroom as compared to school and district goals (Roberson & Roberson, 2009).

Conducting classroom observations and providing feedback to promote critical reflection are areas where mentors need specific skills to support the novice in building his or her craft (Stanulis & Ames, 2009). Mentors can learn to gather evidence about the beginning teachers' practice and guide them towards continued learning (Stanulis & Ames, 2009) in order to have an impact on student learning; however, to do this successfully mentors need training to help promote reflective thinking and elicit ideas from the novice teachers, primarily by asking non-judgmental questions, listening, and providing non-evaluative feedback through paraphrasing, clarifying, and presenting empirical evidence from the classroom observations (Strong & Baron, 2004).

Effective observation during mentoring incorporates contextual understanding, critical reflection of assumptions, and validating meaning by assessing reasons to make the observation worthwhile. The mentor should serve as a catalyst for reflection by supporting and guiding the novice, not evaluating (Boreen et al., 2009). Specifically, incorporating a self-awareness and self-reflective component in the post-observation meeting as a way to review observations using a specific inventory would be beneficial. Following the novice observing the mentor, beginning teachers should discuss with their mentor the observed strategy and how it can be integrated into his or her instruction (Northwest Territory Teacher Induction, 2011). After observations of lessons, mentors and their novices should address concerns or questions through critical reflection and offer strategies for improvement (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). Having a specific inventory can guide the mentoring meeting after observation, in order to enable the novice teachers to monitor and reflect on their practice, and learn about areas that may need developing. Mentors, therefore, serve as guides for novices and guide them in creative directions to discover how to develop effective student learning conditions (Boreen et al., 2009).

Incorporating observations and engaging in reflective practices is consistent with the New Jersey Professional Standards (NJPS) for Teachers and School Leaders. NJPS for Teachers and School Leaders (2004) provide a clear vision of knowledge, performance standards, and dispositions that teachers and school leaders need in order to support the student learning called for in the revised Standards. The professional standards can serve as the foundation for more thoughtful pre-service education and induction programs based on relevant professional development by offering specific indicators. For example, Standard Ten, which relates to professional development for teachers, states that all teachers shall engage in a wide range of reflective practices by pursuing opportunities to grow professionally and establishing collegial

relationships to enhance the teacher and learning process. By incorporating self-reflection and encouraging collegial relationships in a mentoring program, a district helps meet guidelines set forth by the state. A reflection paper is one example that can be used to document new information learned and stimulate thinking to guide discussion about the lesson observed. This paper can take many forms and vary in detail; most importantly, it should be completed after the observed lesson to shape the dialogue for the post-observation conference. Reflection papers will encourage the novices to recognize the skills they perceived as weaknesses and areas to improve. Self-awareness and reflection are components of adult learning, which can serve as topics of discussion during post-observation meetings (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998; Mezirow, 2000). Post-observation meetings include critical reflection to promote dialogue between mentors and novices to enrich the learning experience of participating in an observation process.

As mentioned earlier, the observation protocols available on the National School Reform Faculty website can also facilitate reflective dialogue. For example, one that may be particularly appropriate for novice teachers observing their mentors is the “Observer as Learner” protocol in which the observer (novice teacher) focuses on whatever s/he wishes. Afterwards the dyad has a debriefing, during which the observer asks the observed questions that might help him or her better understand the choices made by the observed. Consequently, there is the potential for the observed to feel vulnerable in a situation, such as this, where they may have little idea of what the observer is focusing on during the lesson. Therefore it is important that the observer try to ask questions during the debriefing in a way that does not put the observed on the defensive (See Appendix B).

Goals and Benefits of Effective Mentoring

The transition from student teacher to practicing teacher can be a challenging adjustment (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011); however, induction programs help to make this adjustment easier. Mentoring can be a key factor in a successful induction program (Ingersoll & Strong, 2004). Teacher socialization, adjustment, development, and assessment are beneficial outcomes that contribute to improving the performance and retention of novice teachers. Ideally, both the novice and mentor teachers benefit from the relationship and grow professionally and personally. The learning flows in both directions, mentors may learn new and different approaches to instruction as well (Boreen et al., 2009) as a result of observing and collaborating with new teachers. Additionally, well-designed and supported mentoring programs raise retention rates for new teachers by improving their attitudes, instructional skills, and feelings of efficacy (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Serving as a mentor allows veteran teachers to have an impact on future teacher performance and help new members of the profession bring vital pedagogical beliefs and techniques into classrooms (Boreen et al., 2009). Mentors continually deliver a sufficient breadth of knowledge and expertise to contribute to the work of colleagues (Furlong & Smith, 1996). An induction program with mentoring support helps ease the transition into the teaching profession for novices and has numerous benefits for a school.

Positive benefits are not automatic, however they only occur with appropriate supports and structures as well as clearly articulated expectations at the district and school levels. The more mentor-novice contact required by the district, the better the desired effects (improving teacher quality and reducing teacher turnover rate) of the mentoring program (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Washburn-Moses, 2010). Offering the mentors and novices opportunities to collaborate on ways to improve practice and participate in collective planning are fundamental to successful mentoring. For example, in a study conducted by Ingersoll and Smith (2004), novice

teachers who received regular supportive communication and common planning time combined with other induction supports had a lower turnover rate than others not exposed to those supports. In another study designed to assess the success of a teacher mentoring program, participants were asked to rate teacher involvement/support, staff development, administration support, resources and materials. The researchers investigated the views of 46 mentors in the study and the findings reported positive experiences when mentors were given time to spend with and observe novices, felt appreciated for the work they provided to new teachers, and maintained excellent communication with novices and administration (Barrera et al., 2010).

The following sections outline how novices, mentors, and school districts can benefit from a productive mentoring program in specific ways.

Novices

Novices can receive help from their assigned mentors in many areas including academic instruction, classroom management, and school policy and procedures. This assistance can help alleviate a novice's anxiety about teaching (Moss, 2010). Beginning teachers who participate in an effective mentoring program can gain self-confidence, improve comfort level, and hone their teaching skills; this can lead to heightened job satisfaction. They may also perform better at various aspects of teaching, such as keeping students on task, developing substantive lesson plans, using effective student questioning practices, adjusting classroom activities to meet students' interests, and maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere (Ingersoll & Strong, 2004). Much of the literature on mentoring reviewed by Ingersoll and Strong (2004) showed that students of beginning teachers who participated in some kind of induction process had higher scores, or gains, on academic achievement tests than those who did not. In another study, principals asserted that mentored teachers have better morale, increased willingness to take risks,

and more effective problem solving strategies than those without mentors (Boreen et al., 2009). When new teachers receive mentoring support to enhance critical thinking and motivation and become more effective in the classroom, the potential for student learning increases (Boreen et al., 2009). The assistance offered by mentors and a mentoring program, help the novice develop into a proficient teacher.

Mentors

Not only do mentors help novices but they reap the benefits of a successful mentoring program as well. Mentors can develop leadership skills, gain new ideas, increase their confidence, and share pedagogical and other strategies. By facilitating the implementation of new ideas and offering supportive mentoring services, veteran teachers can enhance their self-image (Northwest Territory Teacher Induction, 2011). Successful mentors begin to see themselves as more dynamic and confident teachers serving their school in a different and important capacity and feel more valued (Yost, 2002). Furthermore, many veteran teachers state that mentoring and coaching novices creates an incentive for them to remain in teaching as they learn and share with their more junior colleagues (Darling-Hammond, 2003). When teachers interact with colleagues, including novice teachers, they become more conscious of their own craft (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998) allowing them to self-reflect and improve their teaching. Collaboration amongst staff members enhances the opportunity to learn from each other about useful practice. Much can be gained by a veteran teacher from becoming a mentor and joining into a partnership with a novice teacher (Furlong & Smith, 1996).

School

Novices positively influence schools by bringing new ideas on teaching methodology, being more willing to experiment, and preparing new materials. In fact, these features remind

established teachers about classroom performance and raising preparation standards. Supporting novices through a strong mentoring program increases the effectiveness of the school by kindling relationships in which all stakeholders have much to offer. The reciprocal opportunities of mentoring benefit the teachers and school overall, thus increasing student achievement by providing more effective teachers.

Mentoring can also help administrators improve school culture. For example, administrative support of mentoring in the induction process can lead to better relations between participating teachers and principals. Novices view principals as knowledgeable about teacher quality and job performance, thus causing them to seek administrative approval and feedback (Roberson & Roberson, 2009). Since increased interactions or collaboration between teachers and administrators can contribute to a positive school culture and decrease teacher turnover, principals should take an active role in the mentoring program. Likewise, mentors model respect for the school administration and encourage novice teachers to feel comfortable in expressing their opinions and concerns at faculty meetings (Boreen et al., 2009). Administrators who promote encouragement and support from all staff will aid in the novices' induction, thus enhancing the established school culture.

A mentoring program which supports sharing opinions and appreciating others' viewpoints earns respect from staff members and help ease the novice into the school culture (Boreen et al., 2009). Social interactions and networking can lead to a better understanding of the school community and increase student learning and achievement. Therefore, mentors stay attuned to school culture and prepare a beginning teacher for unique attributes of the school, such as sharing common school jokes to help the novice feel acculturated (Boreen et al., 2009). A proper induction program can aide in the retention of competent teachers, and through

collaboration and interaction, an understanding of the community and school culture increases and continues (Northwest Territory Teacher Induction, 2011).

In addition, novices who are mentored grow professionally to become quality teachers that contribute to the school in worthwhile ways. Mentors can help promote and sustain professional development by steering novices toward a commitment to ongoing professional growth and learning. By adhering to professional expectations, demonstrating intellectual growth, and modeling productive behavior; mentors stress the importance of professional development (Boreen et al., 2009). A mentor offers a seasoned perspective on setting long-term and short-term professional goals to improve their craft. According to Boreen et al. (2009), the years of experience a mentor has in various areas can lead a novice teacher to new investigations, new professional sources and organizations, and new commitment and resolve to improve curriculum and instruction. Proper mentoring programs guide novices to improve their professional skills and knowledge thus becoming more valuable to a school and better equipped to service students.

Benefits to the school culture include shaping teachers' professionalism, enhancing best practice for the school through cooperative and collaborative interaction among professions, nurturing critical analysis and inquiry, encouraging a certain amount of risk-taking in the interest of improving the quality of teaching and learning and maintaining and raising professional standards (Booth et al., 1990). Schools that are well staffed in terms of expertise in curriculum, classroom management, and pedagogical skills can be established through professional development opportunities achieved through mentoring (Furlong & Smith, 1996). Various stakeholders such as students, teachers, schools, mentors and novices can benefit from a strong mentoring program.

Structured mentoring programs instituted in schools facilitate the induction of the novice teacher. The positive effects of mentoring through an induction process are both affective and cognitive. The mentor-novice relationship is mutually beneficial both professionally and personally. This two-way professional partnership contributes to the growth and development of both teachers in a mentoring dyad. Making the transition for beginning teachers easier, reducing teacher turnover, and increasing work satisfaction are the main goals of an induction program (Barrera et al., 2010). Schools can create a magnetic effect when they establish commitment in finding, keeping, and supporting good teachers because teachers seek out environments in which they can learn from their colleagues and create success for their students (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Successfully bringing new teachers into the practice is an integral element of this process (Furlong & Smith, 1996)

Besides teachers and school culture improving with a strong mentoring program, retaining new teachers has numerous long-term benefits for a district as well. Even though providing induction support and professional development to new teachers is costly to a district (Jandoli, 2013) it is less costly than the expense of constantly recruiting and hiring. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) estimated the national turnover cost to districts was over \$7 billion in 2005 (Jandoli, 2013). Financially, schools spend a large amount of money replacing departing teachers with new teachers. In addition, NCTAF finds the loss of continuity for students, parents, and school community to be a consequence of high attrition rates (Jandoli, 2013). Employee turnover has especially serious consequences in workplaces, such as schools, that require extensive interaction among participants and that depend on commitment, continuity, and cohesion amongst staff members (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Based on that perspective, it is important to try to reduce teacher turnover rates because staffing problems may

cause the school environment and student performance to be harmed. Establishing support programs in schools to increase retention and having all teachers, both veteran and novice, adequately prepared, supported, and striving to improve instructional practice for students is the foundation for school-wide improvement (Johnson et al., 2001). A strong mentoring program has been demonstrated to contribute to this effort.

Implementation and Challenges

Although not specific to mentoring, it is important to discuss the challenges of implementation efforts in schools since this research study describes implementing a new mentoring program. In fact, little research has been conducted on the implementation of research-based mentoring programs. Implementation is the process of putting into practice an idea, program, or set of activities and structures new to the people attempting or expecting to change (Fullan, 2007). Understanding the change process is critical while implementing any school reform. Therefore leaders need to take into consideration various tasks such as the goals, difficulties, resistance, re-culturing, and the complexity of the always-changing process. Change is a highly personal experience; everyone will have different reactions, concerns, and motivations for being involved (Spiro, 2011). As a result, an administrator needs to foster relationship building, purposeful interactions, and group problem solving in order to enhance the success of implementing a change initiative.

In addition, creating a non-threatening environment to share knowledge is also crucial to the change process (Fullan, 2001). Allowing teachers to voice their needs and suggestions may help the quality of the initiative upon implementation because the new plan would then be based upon their experiences (Queeney, 1995). Teachers' needs should be assessed before the initiative and throughout the process. Prior to answering any questions about their needs, staff members

should be informed that their responses will not be a judgment of their work, but rather a way to gather information to improve, in this case the current induction program for the district (Silberman & Auerbach, 2006). By using information from the participants and research on best practices, the researcher can find a way to present the proposed organizational change and create a shared vision with staff, students, and parents (Fullan, 2001).

Gaining a strong sense of purpose from all parties affected by the change process and making people feel a part of the initiative can help inspire them to work towards common goals (Fullan, 2001). An advisory group of participants that values the initiative can share successes with colleagues, which may decrease resistance and increase teacher buy-in (Fullan, 2001). In accordance with suggested guidelines, the entire mentoring program should be collaboratively developed with the full participation and agreement of district officials and the local teachers' union (NYSED.gov). Experience has shown that professional development is most effective when it is planned with the input of representatives of the recipients of the training (NYSED.gov). Therefore including the mentors and former novices in creating the mentoring program may increase its chance of sustainability.

The New York State Education Department outlines an implementation model for mentoring and offers recommendations for elements to include in a program for novice teachers. A suggested model for developing a mentoring program includes: constructing a knowledge base (literature and experience); designing the program; identifying constraints and potential outcomes; and informing the greater school/district community of the proposed model (NYSED.gov). Next, as part of the process, is to outline the implementation plan, and then implement, assess, and modify program components as appropriate. Schools and school districts can examine the process of mentoring and customize it to fit their own goals and needs based on

resources (Barrera et al., 2009). Conducting one-legged interviews with teachers who have participated in mentoring by asking them questions, then documenting their responses for later analysis, will allow the implementation leader to assess the program informally and without too much interruption to the teachers' daily schedules (Hall & Hord, 2006). This approach gathers information about the process quickly and often, which is important because ongoing monitoring and evaluation can help determine which elements are most important for a successful outcome. Obviously, it is important to be mindful of funding and resources at the start of the initiative and throughout the process to sustain change (Spiro, 2011). Modeling, planning, gaining feedback, and preparing resources help the development of a new program.

Resistance is likely to occur when a new initiative begins. Regardless of how positive the change, something is being altered which usually involves a loss and transition (Spiro, 2011). At times, people involved in change may feel they are being blamed for inadequacies or caused the need for the changes; however, resistance and discomfort cannot always be avoided, steps can be taken to minimize them. Individuals may feel threatened, insecure, or uncertain, (Spiro, 2011) about the changes in the mentoring program. Likewise, the more teachers or staff members that have had negative experiences with previous implementation attempts in the district or elsewhere, the more cynical or apathetic they will be about the next change presented, regardless of the quality of the new idea or program (Fullan, 2007). With that being said, recognizing why adverse reactions may occur and assuring the staff that things will improve through these recommendations (Spiro, 2011) may help support the mentoring changes. Leaders must avoid making too many changes at the same time because it can be too overwhelming (Spiro, 2011). Ultimately, being mindful of potential resistance, not creating too many changes, and seeking participant feedback can enhance the success of any initiative.

Conclusion

The literature suggests several features of a mentoring program, which help make it a strong part of successful teacher induction. The Loop School District should apply these research-based principles to improve the mentoring process. Features such as the careful selection of mentors, thoughtful pairing of mentors with novices, common planning time, collaboration, observation, and reflection can increase the benefits of mentoring for the district. Since I am a teacher leader rather than a building or district administrator, I have had some constraints on what I can implement. For this research-based mentoring program I have drawn on ideas from literature regarding preparation, collaboration, and observation to create my design.

The Loop School District needed to reinvigorate and reorganize the mentoring program if it is to help meet the goal of retaining and increasing the effectiveness of new teachers and improving student performance. By implementing a program with components linked to best practice examples described in this literature review, I have attempted to alter its mentoring practices for greater success. Ideally, the selection of mentors should follow specific criteria; then the mentors should be trained properly. Once trained, the mentor should be paired with a novice in a purposeful manner. After this matching process, the dyads should complete a series of planned and purposeful collaborative activities beyond just logging 20 hours of meeting time or engaging in unspecified interactions. Furthermore, observation of each other, critical reflection, and systematic approaches to dialogue for meetings were pieces added to this mentoring experience in an effort to make it beneficial for all teachers. The potential goals and benefits were made clear to all stakeholders at the beginning of this mentoring program. Continuous feedback and communication were critical to evaluating the process. By drawing on

specific literature every effort was made to align the mentoring program with current professional development trends. With the new components added, the potential benefits of retaining new teachers who can perform their jobs at a high-level increases.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The Goal

The goal of this study was to implement a research-based mentoring program in School Three in the Loop School District. When shaping a school reform effort, such as a research-based mentoring program, a leader must emphasize the reform ideas, strategies, and practices of the design. Before embarking on this new initiative, I spoke with the participants to make them aware of the reasons and goals for the organizational change and in what ways and to what extent they would be engaged in the process (Supovitz & Weinbaum, 2008). The current mentoring program did not provide novice teachers with adequate services, information about in-district procedures, curriculum, or guidelines. Therefore modifications needed to be made to the existing policies. In an effort to increase teacher retention and student achievement, practices selected for redesigning the mentoring program included monitoring implementation of the program, increasing participant accountability, and adding observation and reflection components to the current practices. Derived from research and best practice the following subsections outline how the new mentoring program was implemented in the 2012-2013 school year. Elements that were essential to the success of the new mentoring program are; preparation which focuses on orienting teachers to the structured mentoring process, scheduled mentor and novice meetings, and the observation component with critical reflection.

Preparation

As a teacher leader in the Loop School District, I had several recommendations from the research literature on how to implement changes regarding the organization of the mentoring program. First, the district should work on establishing a collaborative school culture involving trust and positive relationships. When positive relationships are formed, it is easier to gain

commitment to new initiatives from the staff. Utilizing team building exercises and promoting collaboration amongst colleagues can enhance the success of future change efforts (Fullan, 2001).

Trust developing activities and team building exercises were planned to occur during a meeting for the mentoring dyads scheduled for before the school year began; however, this did not occur because the pairs in School Three were not formally matched by the district until October, although I was informally told at the start of the school year who the mentors and novices were. Therefore, with permission from my principal, I met with all mentoring pairs to discuss some of the upcoming changes, as well as the research project related to them, in September. Teachers were made aware that their participation in the study was voluntary.

During the month of October the principal and vice principal of School Three called a meeting for mentors and novices. All staff was already aware of my research study, but I was invited to the meeting to speak about it and the mentoring program I was planning to implement. During this meeting, I was able to introduce the proposed changes to the district mentoring program and the reason for them. My organizational goals and recommendations for improvement were made clear as well as my expectations for each stakeholder. I shared the documents I had developed as part of the new mentoring program design ("Cheers and Fears" form and the Observation and Reflection Log) with each teacher, reminded them that their participation was voluntary, and asked if they had questions (See Appendix C and D). No participant had questions for me at this meeting.

After the meeting I spoke informally with the mentor and novice teachers often, but was unable to provide professional development opportunities or speak at faculty meetings due to time limitations, mandated meetings, and district constraints. In order to build a positive regard

for the mentoring program; however, I provided resources (that were at my disposal or that I could create) to the teachers when they asked. In addition, I covered the teachers' classes during my preparation time to allow observations to occur and created a Tracking Log for them to have a systematic way to keep track of the time spent together (See Appendix E). I encouraged the teachers to trust me as well as each other by promoting honest and open dialogue. Being able to respond to questions and assist the mentors and novices with planning for meetings and observations contributed to building trust and improving the school culture. Although I was unable to provide professional development directly to teachers, my presence and availability to the staff contributed to building a strong School Three community. I was able to keep the dyads focused on meeting weekly (at least in the beginning) and recording session topics. Providing time for the teachers, giving verbal support, encouraging dyads to meet, and asking questions designed to enhance quality of meetings were ways I was able to scaffold the mentoring relationship. Even though my efforts were small and not school-wide they had a positive impact; furthermore having the support of my principal and vice principal in developing a strong school culture increased the trust building in School Three.

The administrators in School Three continuously emphasized the importance of trust in building a successful school with dedicated staff. Separate from my study, although helpful, several professional development opportunities were provided for the whole staff in an effort to build trust and move School Three towards collegial not just congenial relationships. Congeniality refers to friendly cordial relationships that teachers have in the workplace, for example talking in the lunchroom about weekend plans (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008). While congenial relationships (e.g., lunch time exchanges about family and weekend plans) are pleasant, Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008) pointed out that collegial relationships promote

inquiry and professional discussions that help construct new knowledge about teaching (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008). Collegiality refers to adults in a school having frequent, continuous, concrete, and precise talk about their teaching practice (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008). In order to create collegial relationships at School Three, professional development aimed at building trust and improving relationships focused on substantive issues of teaching and learned was provided to the faculty. Although training mentor and novice teachers was not the main focus of school professional development meetings, the importance of observation in a mentoring program was mentioned on at least one occasion. According to the comments made by faculty, professional development sessions provided by Stephen Barkley inspired the staff and provided concrete examples of how we can strive together towards improving our craft as professionals.

In addition to building trust and developing school culture, my mentoring plan included providing mentoring dyads with a structure they could use during their meetings and for observations.

Mentor/Novice Meetings

According to researchers, regularly scheduled meetings with mentors that employ a specific structure and focus are beneficial for novice teachers. When I approached the dyads about the expected frequency of their mentoring meetings, all dyads planned to meet on a weekly basis at a set time and place. Since the schedule seemed to be in place, in order to provide more structure to mentoring meetings in the Loop School, a document was created to facilitate novice and mentor dialogue. The idea of this was that before each session, novices would record their “Cheers and Fears” to guide the discussions. Specifically, the novice would write three or more positive things (cheers) and three or more instructional issues about which he or she was uncertain or apprehensive (fears) (Ganser, 1992). This document was created to provide

structure to meetings and assist the mentor in responding directly to her novice. An example of this technique was illustrated in a study conducted by Tauer (1996), in which successful relationships were characterized by sustained interaction between the two participants. The mentor teacher based the relationship with the novice on the needs, wants, or expectations of his or her partner. Since this responsive approach appeared to be favored by the novices in that study, the “Cheers and Fears” paper was given to the novices of School Three in an effort to facilitate this kind of responsive relationship. The only other document given to the teachers to provide structure for the meetings was a Tracking Log that could be used to document how many hours they had met. This Log was created because the district did not provide the dyads anything official for this purpose. This Log was brief and asked the teachers to record the date, time, and topic(s) discussed during the meetings. Other than providing these two documents, I encouraged the dyads to follow a structure they felt most comfortable so as to not interfere too much or unduly influence data or the process.

By providing teachers with the “Cheers and Fears” document, the intention was to provide some structure for the dyads’ meetings, and create a responsive approach to the novice teachers’ needs and concerns. Having novices complete this task could help them focus the discussion on their needs. Through informal conversations and one-legged interviews, I noticed many dyads completed this activity through discussion rather than formally writing it on paper. Although I gave the novices several copies of the “Cheers and Fears” form, I am unsure how many completed it and used it.

Classroom Observations

In addition to mentoring meetings, mentors and novices observed each other’s classrooms. Opportunities for mutual observation with recorded reflections, critical feedback,

time for co- planning, and analysis of student work are components of a successful mentoring program (Barrera et al., 2010; Young et al., 2005). Therefore, in addition to trying to implement structured responsive meetings using the “Cheers and Fears” activity, observations, arranged by the teachers and me, were scheduled in mentor and novice classrooms with classroom coverage provided for the observer. I gave the Observation and Reflection Log to teachers for recording their thoughts and comments, and to facilitate in reflective dialogue during post-observation meetings. Initially, the first document asks the teacher being observed to determine an area of focus for the observation, record teaching strategies during the observation, and write questions that arose while observing. After the observation, the teachers were to debrief the observed lesson and establish a plan of next steps and support needed, then reflect on the plan. Although this document appeared to promote rich dialogue and reflective practice, it asked for a lot of writing by the teachers.

It is important for novices to observe veteran teachers’ strategies to broaden their knowledge of teaching methods and other classroom techniques. Likewise, mentors may learn new teaching strategies and be better suited to discuss ideas in a responsive manner after observing the novice in action in his/her classroom. After classroom observation, teachers should reflect on the lesson. Engaging in reflective practices is an element of the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders. Reflection papers encourage novices to identify instructional areas they feel are weak and highlight those in need of improvement. To support this process, the Observation and Reflection Logs were given to study participants.

Although the original Observation and Reflection Log given to the teachers encouraged rich dialogue, it was three pages long and took a lot of time for the teachers to complete. Teachers can learn by observing colleagues, but completing too much paperwork may be

perceived as tedious and not valuable. Because I did ongoing data analysis while collecting data, I was able to make changes in the design when things were not working well. For example, I learned that the original Observation and Reflection Log was not being used. Through one-legged interviews and conversations, I gained feedback about the Log and learned that it was too much written work for the teachers and took away from the worthwhile experience of observing each other's classrooms. In addition to the time commitment involved in filling out the original Log, teachers had difficulty just keeping their hands on them. The amount of paperwork teachers are required to complete has increased over the years, making it easy to misplace documents. I realized this when a veteran teacher approached me with the original observation form a week after she observed her novice and asked if she had to complete the form. The confusion and lack of response caused me to revise my plan and create a simpler document which was completed more often. As a result, the simple document helped the mentoring pairs select a focus for the observation prior to it, and provided a structure for doing a brief reflection on how it was helpful subsequent to it (Appendix F).

Although participants reported that the observations were valuable, arranging them took time and preparation because three teachers' schedules had to correspond. First, I needed to be available to cover the observing teachers' class for her to be able to leave to watch the other teacher in the subject matter requested. Of course the observed teacher had to make sure the selected lesson was ready to be observed at the given time. In order to meet all these time and scheduling requirements, frequent planning and collaboration occurred.

Methodology

Mixed Methods Study

This research study involved qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures. Qualitative data was collected through interviews, audio recordings of meetings, and documents. Additionally, quantitative survey data was collected to gain feedback about the data that emerged from the qualitative data. The survey data was analyzed and then displayed in a graph format to show mentors' and novices' perspectives quantitatively. Conducting qualitative research enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives of mentors and novices on the process and policies of the mentoring program in the School Three elementary school (Merriam, 2009). By using both quantitative and qualitative research methods, I collected various data to both deepen and broaden the findings. For instance, documenting how the School Three participants interpreted and engaged in the act of mentoring led to identifying patterns regarding the process. Once these patterns were identified, I started noticing themes surrounding the teachers' experiences. By conducting a mixed methods research study in my district, I aimed to understand how mentors and novices interpreted their experiences with the new mentoring program implemented this past school year. Through a purposeful sample, I gained an understanding of how both mentor and novice teachers viewed the process. By performing a formative evaluation I was able to document and assess the mentoring program activities (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). Furthermore, this formative evaluation provided valuable feedback to administrators, teachers, and me about the progress made through implementation (Rossi et al., 2004). While implementing a new mentoring program with components designed to enact best practices, the program was evaluated.

Description of Site

There are approximately 300 students in each of the eight elementary schools in the district. Based on the neighborhoods in which they live, the families with higher socioeconomic status attend three of the elementary schools in the section of the city known as “Sunnyside.” On the other hand, in five of the elementary schools (including School Three where I conducted the majority of my research) located “downtown,” approximately 70% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. The elementary schools underwent a redistricting in the 2012-2013 school year, the year this study was conducted. At School Three, a staff of 55 teachers was needed, as compared to only 25 the previous year. Several novice teachers were hired and some required mentoring support. This elementary school houses classrooms from pre-k through grade five. The classrooms are located together by grade level; there are three to four classrooms per grade depending on student enrollment. The novices and mentors all taught in lower grades. Some teachers who were new to the building were transferred from other schools in the district, but many were new hires.

Since the building doubled in size, with an increase in student population and building extension, it became the largest elementary school in the district with approximately 400 students. In School Three during the 2012-13 school year, 281 students received free lunch, 62 received reduced lunch. The school has never made annual yearly progress according to standards related to No Child Left Behind. The racial student composition of the school is approximately 43% Hispanic, 32% Black, 16% White, and 9% other. According to The New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) scores, in the 2011-2012 academic year, the percentage of students not proficient in fourth grade was 31.7% in mathematics and 48.7% in language arts. Additionally, the percentage of third grade students who were not proficient was high: 45.6% in both mathematics and language arts. Studies show a research based mentoring

program can adequately prepare novice teachers to be effective, thus increasing student achievement and test scores. Clearly, this is very relevant at School Three.

As a result of the influx of novice teachers and low test scores, the principal at School Three agreed to let me implement a mentoring program and evaluate the new components. She has known me for three years, has been an advocate of my research, encourages staff to further their education, and welcomes staff professional development and collaborative efforts. With that being said, the principal believed that a successful mentoring program would enhance her school wide goals and fully supported my research project.

Description of Sample

Although there were many transfers and new hires at School Three, only three dyads were matched by the principal for mentoring services this school year. All teachers who participated in the mentoring program in School Three during the 2012-2013 school year were asked to participate in the study. I spoke individually with each of the teachers who were working in mentoring dyads in an effort to recruit them to participate in the study. I presented them with the study focus, data collection plan, and information about mentoring so that they could choose to implement the new components and/or participate in the research study. My principal was aware of my study and gave me permission to contact all teachers. Originally, when I spoke with the teachers I began by asking them about their mentoring expectations and goals for the mentoring experience for this school year. Although this was not a formal data collection procedure, I utilized their answers to inform the mentoring process and design. I also offered to help them in any way needed (covering classes, providing documents). Additionally, I spoke at an afterschool mentoring meeting at School Three, in October, after the dyads had been officially paired by the district. During this meeting I reiterated my research questions, the

purpose of study, and distributed the documents I had created to support the program design ("Cheers and Fears," Observation and Reflection Log, and Tracking Log). Three novices and three mentors were asked to voluntarily participate in this study in an effort to improve the mentoring program in the district. Teachers could choose to utilize the new components of the mentoring program but opt out of the study; their participation was voluntary. Ultimately, my objective was to have at least two mentoring pairs participate in the study. Fortunately, all three dyads participated. Their experiences, perspectives, and feedback were documented for research purposes once they had signed consent forms. However, a complete data set was collected from only one pair. Due to issues of confidentiality, time, and resources two of the dyads were unable to complete a third audio recording. Mentors and novices who utilized the new components but did not participate in all aspects of data collection may have influenced the results. In order to maximize opportunities to gather data, I tried to address participants' hesitations regarding data collection in an effort to gather the full range of experiences and perceptions of the program. One novice was questioning her privacy and was nervous her audios would be played for various people, I assured her that the recording would not be played for an audience. Another novice teacher was under the impression I was there to critique her or offer evaluative comments. She often asked me to let her know if I thought she should change something in her classroom or regarding teaching practice; therefore, many times in the beginning stages, I needed to reassure her I was not skilled in her grade level content enough to know if she was not teaching effectively and moreover it was not my role or intention to assess her.

All the mentor teachers were agreeable from the start with one having to check that the principal was aware. I confirmed that all administrators were more than aware about my research study, in fact they fully encouraged and supported my efforts. I also assured teachers

that I was not evaluating or reporting anything to the building administration about them, but was only interested in their opinions about the mentoring experience as a way to improve it. The fact that there were different levels of teacher participation was a study limitation because teachers could not be required to participate in this program or the research component. Also, the teachers may have chosen to participate only in the mentoring program without allowing the data to be collected, luckily this did not happen. Table 1 describes the form of data collection and which participants participated in each form of data collection.

Table 1

Participants and Level of Participation

Participants		Form of Data Collection				
	Interview	Recorded Session 1	Recorded Session 2	Recorded Session 3	Document Collection	Survey
Jane	√	√	√	√	√	√
Sally	√	√	√	√	√	√
Liz	√	√	√			√
Paula	√	√	√			√
Vicky	√	√	√			√
Colleen	√	√	√			√
Adelyn	√					
Jerry	√					

Participants. Table 2 summarizes key information about study participants including gender, teaching position, age, and years in the district. Following the table, there is a brief description about each dyad with more details about the participants in the study.

Because School Three is small and the number of novices and mentors is also small, simply using pseudonyms was not an adequate protection of the research participants' identities. Therefore, to help protect the identities of the participants, their attributes were combined and redistributed to create composite profiles of the participants that are representative but not

specific to them. By using a composite profile to respect participants' privacy and not disclosing specific information, it is harder for them to be identified (Creswell, 2010).

Dyad One. The two teachers in this dyad, Jane and Sally, had a relationship with each other previous to their being matched in a mentoring pair. This seemed to contribute to their conversations being open and honest from the start. Jane, currently a third grade teacher, has been teaching for over 20 years in the same elementary school and has taught several different grade levels, from kindergarten to fifth grade. Her excellent organizational and preparation skills are known by all the teachers and who refer to her as the matriarch of School Three. She has formally been assigned by the district to have mentored over 20 novice teachers since she was trained by the district for this role in 2006. Although officially assigned to mentor Sally, Jane informally assists numerous beginning teachers with questions and concerns. Sally, a mother of two, began her teaching career once her children were both in school. Before becoming a full-time teacher, she worked as a substitute in various grade levels throughout the district. Although this dyad planned to meet frequently, their classroom locations at some distance from each other, opposite lunch and prep schedules, and differences in grade levels caused some limitations. When this dyad first got matched they were meeting one to two days a week, then in January, the mentor went on disability until the end of the school year with no other mentor assigned to Sally.

Dyad Two. Liz is a middle-aged, well-respected veteran who has been placed in several schools in the district over the course of her career there. She has only taught second grade, but has mentored about five teachers since being trained as a mentor in 2006. Liz is professional and a teacher whose work is structured, but who rarely participates in school social events. She was paired with Paula who was assigned to teach the same grade level. Paula was a first year teacher in her late twenties who is a graduate of the Loop School District. She recently completed

college and began her career as a second grade elementary school teacher in the district. Liz and Paula's classrooms were in close proximity and they taught at the same grade level, which may have made their mentoring relationship easier to foster. Both teachers had full time aids in their classroom which allowed them to step out of the room for quick questions or supply sharing, their lunch periods coincided but they did not have any common prep periods. In the beginning, this dyad was meeting weekly during their lunch period.

Dyad Three. The third pair, Vicky and Colleen, appeared to have few things in common with each other except that Colleen was Vicky's former student. They did not teach the same grade level and had opposite schedules, which made it hard for them to find time to meet. In the beginning, the dyad planned to meet weekly after school but as the school year progressed that changed. This dyad ended up meeting whenever they both had time for example; before or after school, lunchtime. Vicky was a young energetic teacher involved in a lot of extracurricular activities for the district. She was trained as a mentor in 2006 and has mentored about ten novice teachers. Her involvement with coaching and other duties often caused her to leave school immediately at dismissal time or have meetings during lunchtime. Colleen was a long-term substitute teacher in the district prior to arriving as a full-time teacher at School Three, and as such came to her position with considerable knowledge of the curriculum and content. Vicky often said she viewed Colleen as the ideal novice, with few struggles and in little need of advice.

Table 2

Participants' Characteristics

Name	Dyad	Male/Female	Mentor/Novice	Position	Age	Years in District
Jane	1	Female	Mentor	3 rd grade	55	22
Sally	1	Female	Novice	1 st grade	32	1
Liz	2	Female	Mentor	2 nd grade	43	15
Paula	2	Female	Novice	2 nd grade	28	1
Vicky	3	Female	Mentor	1 st grade	37	17
Colleen	3	Female	Novice	Kindergarten	23	1
Adelyn	N/A	Female	N/A	Administrator	40	24
Jerry	N/A	Male	N/A	Administrator	38	10

Data Collection Procedures

Several data collection strategies were used in order to gain multiple perspectives and understand details about the mentoring experiences of Loop School District elementary teachers at School Three. These methods included interviews, audio recordings, researcher journal, document collection and surveys. Gaining various perspectives through different sources helped to gauge what elements of the plan were successful and unsuccessful, as well as what obstacles were encountered in the implementation of the mentoring program. Much information was gathered during one-on-one interviews with all study participants and some mentoring meetings were audio recorded by the dyads. Additionally, documents related to mentoring (“Cheers and Fears,” Observation and Reflection Logs, and Tracking Log) were created by the researcher and collected if completed by the participants. Lastly, an anonymous survey was sent to all mentors and novices who participated in mentoring services in School Three during the 2012-2013 school year. All feedback was analyzed and used to make recommendations for the district regarding future mentoring supports.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted to gain non-observable information about the mentoring program from the perspectives of the participating teachers (Merriam, 2009). These teachers were interviewed as a result of their knowledge of and participation in the new mentoring activities. Prior to the study, participants were made aware that the findings derived from the interview data would be shared publicly for the sole purpose of improving the mentoring program. I attempted to keep all responses confidential, but due to the small number of participants, it could not be guaranteed. Consent forms were completed before the process began and all participants were made aware of the risks of participating in the study (no greater than their daily job entails) with the option to withdraw at any time.

The interview consisted of eight questions (Appendix H). These open-ended questions, similar to a conversation (Merriam, 2009), were flexible; my goal in asking them was to learn about the mentoring program from the perspective of participants. Additionally, probing questions were used to follow up on previously discussed information or to obtain further detail and clarification (Merriam, 2009). In order to yield detailed and descriptive data about the mentors' and novices' perspectives, these questions focused on their experiences, opinions, feelings, knowledge, and background (Patton, 2002). Questions were based on the literature regarding effective induction programs, which contained a structured mentoring component, focusing primarily on observation, critical reflection, mentor selection, and dyad matches. By using the same eight questions with each participant, the reliability amongst interviews increased (Merriam, 2009).

Interviews were conducted on-site, in a private setting, at a time and place convenient to participants during the second half of the school year. One exception was an interview conducted at the home of a mentor teacher who went on disability during the second half of the

school year. By conducting the interviews in the latter part of the school year and completing them prior to the end of school, mentors and novices had time to experience and then reflect on the mentoring activities they participated in while still fresh in their minds.

Documenting Mentoring Sessions

In addition to my interviewing the participants, each dyad audio recorded meetings. The purpose of these recordings was to gather information about how the dyads used and what influenced their mentoring meetings. Rather than observing the mentoring pairs myself, which may have been intrusive, the mentoring pairs were asked to make audio recordings of three consecutive meetings at any point during the school year. The participants were asked simply to turn on the recorder at the beginning of the session and turn it off at the end. These recordings were made in the setting where they typically met with only the participants present. Each dyad had a different experience and their recording topic varied. Time, schedule, and personalities played a role in when the recordings took place. Another issue with making these recordings was confidentiality. The teachers did not want some meetings recorded because they were talking about private matters. Unfortunately, only Dyad One was able to complete three audio recorded sessions with Dyad Two and Three completing only two each.

Dyad One. The first recording took the form of a pre-observation conference in which the dyad went over the Observation and Reflection Log before the mentor observed the novice teaching. During this meeting the novice teacher set a focus for the lesson to be observed. The second recording was a post-observation conference in which the teachers discussed the observed behaviors. The third recording was another post-observation conference from the same lesson in which the teachers discussed how the novice could implement additional teaching strategies to become more effective in specific areas.

Dyad Two. The first audio recording for this dyad was the teachers discussing the novice's observation of the mentor. The novice teacher asked various questions regarding curriculum, supplies, and how to teach specific skills from the observed lesson. The second recording was of the teachers discussing the mentor's observation of the novice. The mentor praised the novice in certain areas and then offered her advice on how she could improve in other areas.

Dyad Three. During their first recording, this dyad discussed classroom procedures and concerns about student behavior. During the second recording the novice asked the mentor many procedural questions, expressed concerns about students, and asked about expectations for student learning for the following grade level.

“One-legged” Interviews/Researcher Journal

By conducting one-legged interviews with the novice teachers I was able to gain knowledge about their needs or concerns in an ongoing way. One-legged interviews are typically used when people have little time to talk and often are used when checking in about initiatives. Some advantages to this interviewing technique are the frequency at which they can occur and the convenience of time and place for teachers. Based on what I heard, I recorded notes in a journal, which described my fears, ideas, mistakes, and reactions regarding the mentoring program I had initiated for the study (Merriam, 2009). I tried to check in with the novices weekly, especially in the beginning of the school year. Often they would ask me questions about school procedures or mentoring policies. In addition to my implementing the mentoring program, I believe that I was viewed as another veteran teacher these novices could trust to ask questions. After having brief check in conversations with the teachers, I would go back to my classroom and record my observations and thoughts in my researcher journal. These

notes were helpful for me to reflect on the process thus far and make changes as needed (for example, altering the observation schedule or changing the documents).

Documents

Collecting documents and artifacts helped me gain information about the mentoring in School Three during the course of the study. Furthermore, evaluating artifacts and documents about the district's mentoring processes and policies helped triangulate the data by providing additional sources to support my findings. Artifacts and documents were good clues to determine what occurred during the mentoring process. Documents can be found in multiple forms, but for the purpose of this study, researcher-generated and participant generated documents completed by mentors and novices were collected. Pairs were asked to keep a Tracking Log, "Cheers and Fears" documents, and the Observation and Reflection Log to guide critical reflection. The intent was to collect these documents as a way to learn more about the mentoring program being investigated (Merriam, 2009). Reviewing the "Cheers and Fears" document, Tracking Log, and Observation and Reflection Logs completed by the participants would provide information about what was discussed during meetings. Although subjective in nature, these documents can provide a reliable source of data concerning the teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and views on a topic (Merriam, 2009). The data could offer insight into the mentors' and novices' perspectives on the new components of the mentoring program and also provide information about utilization of the documents.

Surveys

A survey is a method of systematic collection of data that can focus on participants' beliefs, attitudes, interests, and behaviors using standardized questions (Gall et al., 2010). The last step in data collection for this study as a way to triangulate the data was administering a

survey to the mentor and novice teachers through email (See Appendix I). Before being administered, teachers were made aware that their participation was optional and their responses were anonymous. Questions ranged from their opinions about the mentoring match and overall dyad relationship, to the documents usage, and facilitator support. Subsequently, the information collected from the surveys mostly provided quantifiable data, which was compared to research on best practices in order to infer improvements for a new mentoring program. Additionally, after certain multiple choice questions, open-ended questions were used as probes to follow up and gain more details or examples based on the participants' responses (Merriam, 2009).

Data Analysis

As the data were collected data analysis began. Data analysis, the process of making sense out of data, involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said, what the evaluator witnessed or read, and making meaning from these concepts (Merriam, 2009). The goal of my data analysis was to answer the research questions: How do the mentors and novices perceive a new research-based mentoring program? How do they use it? What influences their implementation of the mentoring program? Furthermore, this research sought to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the new mentoring program, how it was implemented, and yield recommendations for improved design and implementation in the future. Therefore, the research questions and purpose of the study guided my data analysis.

After interview and audio recording data was transcribed I implemented the beginning stages of analysis. First the data was placed into categories, which corresponded with structured meetings and the observation component of the mentoring program implemented this past year. Next, the data were sorted by research questions to identify, which parts of the data corresponded to the research questions. Based on my research questions, I started with three areas to look at;

mentor and novices' perceptions, how teachers used the program, and what influenced implementation. Then I looked at units (which ranged from a small word used by a participant to pages of field notes describing an incident) of meaningful data and grouped them based on relevance to the research questions (Merriam, 2009). The units of information were compared to each other then assigned to categories created from the new mentoring program implemented. The categories were selected based on their occurrence in data. The assigned categories were observation, meetings, dyad relationship, and mentor qualities. All participants spoke about the qualities they thought a mentor should possess, which seemed to impact the nature of the mentoring experience.

After I categorized units I created codes as the next step toward interpreting the data. Coding is simply assigning shorthand designations to various aspects of the data collected so a researcher can easily retrieve specific pieces of data (Merriam, 2009). Recognizing themes or recurring features in the various data collected led to understanding what activities and factors may have had a perceived impact on the success of the mentoring program (Gall, et al., 2010). These themes led to coding the data, I kept track of my thoughts and themes as they emerged and recorded them in a notebook. Each set of data was interpreted using the same codes, which were derived primarily through an inductive process, as the codes emerged from the data; however, I did begin with some "start" codes (Merriam, 2009): value of observation, meetings, administrative roles (selecting mentors and matching dyads), and mentors' knowledge and role. These start codes emerged from terms I noticed occurring often while I collected data also I thought they played a large role in the mentoring process. I looked for similar concepts when coding the data from the recorded meetings, document collection, and interviews. As I continued data analysis, an additional theme emerged related to the dyads' relationships. In

addition, the mentor's approach emerged as an important factor in the mentoring experience for both teachers. Hence, two new codes were derived; relationship and mentor approach.

As I generated insights about the data I began to look for recurring regularities or similarities as a way to group the coded data into themes. As I systematically classified the data into themes, I thought about how they might be interrelated (Merriam, 2009) to develop a model of interrelationships. Also, I looked for patterns in conjunction with my study's purpose and across the mentoring pairs to identify similarities and differences regarding the perceptions of the new program components. Patterns represent systematic relationships between two or more phenomena within a case or across cases (Gall, et al., 2010). As such, looking for patterns assisted me in identifying the strengths and weaknesses in the mentoring program (Creswell, 2007). These themes helped me make meaning from the data collected and lead to the study findings related to my research questions.

Once the recorded data was collected and coded, surveys were administered to further triangulate the data. All the multiple choice survey data was collected, compiled, and analyzed using Excel. A graph was created to display results, charting mentors' and novices' responses to show the teachers' perspectives regarding the new components (See Appendix J). The open-ended questions are embedded in the findings section in conjunction with the other data collection methods to show a more detailed perspective from each participant.

Validity

To increase the validity, or the congruence of the findings of this study with reality as the participants experience it (Merriam, 2009), five strategies were used. Specifically, establishing credibility, disclosing information about myself as the researcher, triangulating the data, member checking, and peer review were all enacted as a way to enhance the validity of this study.

Establishing credibility between researcher and participants from the start of this project was imperative. A perception of accuracy, fairness, and believability of the study and researcher were important to increasing the validity of the participants' responses. In order to gain trust and credibility, I disclosed all information to participants regarding the data's strengths (accuracy and honesty) and weaknesses such as the small number of participants, myself being the researcher and facilitator, and the timeline and original plan being altered. Furthermore, I frequently communicated with the participants, letting them know about changes to the plan and asking if they had any questions or feedback. Additionally, I made every effort to accurately report the data after it was collected and interpreted. Patton (2008) asserted that a study may not be deemed as having high validity if the research and the researcher are not perceived of as trustworthy. Every effort was made to be perceived this way.

In addition to establishing credibility and disclosing all information about the study to participants, triangulation or the collection of data by multiple methods to report themes and evidence was used to increase validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Using a variety of data sources regarding the mentoring components and perceptions of the program allowed the data to be triangulated to increase its credibility (Merriam, 2009). Not only does triangulation increase credibility, but it also increases internal validity by using multiple methods of data collection and multiple sources of data to confirm findings (Merriam, 2009). By conducting interviews, administering surveys, and collecting recordings of mentoring meetings and documents, data was drawn from multiple sources to increase validity; for example, the audio recordings and interviews were transcribed then analyzed to see how the dyads used the new mentoring program components and their perceptions. In addition, documents completed by the teachers regarding mentoring were collected. I also documented any supports and obstacles the pairs reported they

encountered while implementing the activities or during their meetings. Lastly, surveys were administered through email to the participants as an additional way to triangulate the data by using another source. In sum, I used various methods of data collection and different sources to cross-check the information collected, (Merriam, 2009) to analyze the new mentoring components, and gain mentors' and novices' perceptions of the program. As a result of triangulation, when similar themes emerge through different data collection methods, the validity is increased.

Another strategy used to increase validity was member checking in an effort to move beyond the lens of the researcher to the participants to help establish credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Performing a member check allows the participants to review the collected data to limit misrepresentation. It is a common strategy for ensuring internal validity and credibility (Merriam, 2009). Specifically, I emailed each participant the transcript of her interview to read in order to identify any information that needed to be clarified or added on to. Furthermore, as I compiled my data, I checked in through email and brief conversations with the teachers to make sure I accurately and completely portrayed their experiences and perspectives. Ensuring the participants were represented in a clear and accurate way was imperative to the success of this study. Naturally, communication between the participants and me was key throughout the process. To date, no participant has told me she disagrees with the data collected or the interpretation; therefore, I feel confident that the participants' perspectives are being accurately represented.

In addition to the strategies described above, offering rich descriptions about the site was another approach to help the readers judge the account as credible (Creswell & Miller, 2000). For instance, writing in detail about the Loop District, School Three, mentors, novices, and the

mentoring relationships may help readers relate the findings to similar contexts and settings.

Describing the interactions between mentors and novices also added to a rich description of their mentoring experiences.

Lastly, the research and writing was peer reviewed; classmates scanned the raw data and assessed whether the findings were plausible based on the data as a way to help limit the bias (Merriam, 2009).

Researcher Role and Limitations

Certain factors led to limitations of the study such as being a teacher in School Three, my biases about the district mentoring program, my role in the process, and the varying levels of participation. Limitations may limit the researcher's ability to draw reliable conclusions and derive implications for practice. Although there were limitations to this study, implications can still be drawn from the data.

I am a teacher in the school in which I collected data, I could inadvertently influence the way research participants responded to me as a researcher. I have established a good rapport with my colleagues and administrators, which gave me confidence to begin my research. However, they knew that I developed and was studying this program, so I had to be aware when collecting data that I could influence their responses. Assuring them that I was interested in their experiences and perspectives, for better or for worse, because it could help improve the program hopefully helped them to be honest and open. Several times throughout the data collection process, I reassured the participants that I was interested in their opinions and asked them for honest feedback. Given that I was depending on their perspectives to help me develop practical implications for improving the mentoring program, holding back on their opinions would in fact hinder future district decisions. Before the school year, I gathered data from informal

discussions with teachers about mentoring throughout the district, which led me to implement changes to the program during the study year. This research study created a more formal exploration of mentoring and the implementation of new components during the study's school year. I made an effort to not be judgmental when asking them about the new mentoring components. I believe the participants were honest because they told me positive and negative things about the program.

Seeing as I have been a teacher in School Three for eight years and was mentored by a Loop teacher, I needed to decrease the ways in which my own biases about the mentoring program could affect ways in which I collected and analyzed data. I have created relationships with staff members and often discussed the mentoring process with my colleagues. Through exchanges with other teachers in the district, I discovered that my perspective on the mentoring program was shared by many others. I made my biases, that the mentoring program needed reframing, known and explained them to participants and readers of this study. This clarification might help the readers understand how I interpreted the data. After researching best practice examples, I had ideas about what the district should and could do to improve the mentoring program. For instance, more structured meetings and an observation component were two elements I felt strongly about implementing in the district. I made clear to administration and teachers that these components should be utilized in the mentoring program this school year. When presented with the new components, all staff seemed supportive and willing to fully participate. In sum, I made it known what specific elements and strategies I felt it important to implement and why to enhance the mentoring experience for novices.

However, how I conducted my research and my role with the participants can be seen as a limitation. All the mentors and novices were my colleagues; therefore, I needed to maintain a

good rapport with them and balance my position as a researcher and colleague throughout the process. However, because I am not in an administrative role, I could not require them to participate in all the mentoring or study activities and this led to two dyads not recording their third meeting together. Consequently, I have an incomplete data set. Additionally, much of the paperwork I had hoped would structure the work of the mentoring dyads and contribute to the data for this study did not get returned to me, if it was in fact completed at all. Staff has grown accustomed to not recording mentoring hours or logging meetings; this contributed to an incomplete data set, which meant I could not collect as much data as I anticipated.

Another limitation, in addition to my role in the process, is the varying levels of participation by the teachers, as mentioned earlier. Fortunately, I was able to interview all participants, although only one dyad completed all three recordings. Not much data reported in my findings was gathered from the recordings although not having two additional recordings limited the data set. Unfortunately, only collecting two documents from the participants hinders the results. Due to the fact that no teacher returned any “Cheers and Fears” sheets, it is difficult to know if this paper was beneficial to the dyads and accomplished the goal of adding structure and a responsive approach to mentoring meetings. However, through interviews teachers made positive comments about the “Cheers and Fears” structure. Along the same lines, all teachers praised the observation component and the second reflection log, although not one teacher handed in the document to me and only Dyad One handed in the original Log. Various reasons were given for the lack of document completion and collection, which can be used as data to guide implications; for example, too much writing may cause a worthwhile experience to be deemed as a chore or an undesirable task to be avoided. Although I learned a lot from the data and the lack of documents collected, I think my results would have been richer and more

substantive if more documents were completed and collected. Perhaps a larger number or different participants would have produced better results.

Overall these issues limited my data collection and affected the results of my study, but I was still able to devise a set of implications for my district for future mentoring. Conclusions were still able to be made regarding the future of the mentoring program for the district. The implications were still based on the data collected although limited and not all according to the original plan. Certain limitations contributed to the implications for practice such as the limited time and scheduling for dyads to meet.

Conclusion

After the data analysis process was completed, the findings were presented to the building administration to provide insight on the program's design and implementation. I worked closely with administration and other stakeholders in reporting the information and looking for useful implications for practice to impact future mentoring in the district. Keeping communication open between the evaluator and stakeholders helped lead to a successful evaluation and concrete suggestions for improvement (Rossi et al., 2004). The stakeholders in this study were administrators, mentors, novices, and other teachers in district elementary schools. Chapter five in this dissertation includes implications for practice and the impact that this dissertation had on the Loop District's mentoring.

Chapter Four: Results

Findings can include descriptive accounts, can be organized around themes or categories that cut across the data, or can also take the form of models and theories that explain the data (Merriam, 2009). My data analysis and decisions about how to organize my findings were informed by both the change theory theoretical framework and my research questions. My research questions focused on understanding how the mentors and novices perceived and used the research-based mentoring program I implemented as well as what influences were key to shaping their experiences. Centered on the two research-based elements put in place at School Three during the 2012-2013 school year, the findings focus on how mentors and novices implemented and used observations and meetings.

While researching the history of mentoring in the Loop district, I found many discrepancies, inconsistent stories, and negative feelings regarding the current mentoring program. I also discovered that my colleagues felt that opportunities for them to interact were limited. This is important because Fullan (2007) believed that teachers are the preferred source of new ideas for other teachers, a crucial component of effective change initiatives in schools. I knew there was a need to alter the current mentoring program in the district so that these opportunities could be fostered. It was also necessary was to build on participants' perception of the need for new mentoring initiatives to increase the likelihood of success (Fullan, 2007). Sensing that I was not alone in my desire to restructure the Loop mentoring, I decided to pursue this project; thus, in addition to the knowledge base on new teacher mentoring, my research study was built upon many concepts derived from educational change theory, which offered ideas about implementation and guided the mentoring plans. These theories suggest that existing contextual factors play a critical role in the fate of a change effort. At School Three, there were

several favorable circumstances including a supportive administration, a school culture working toward becoming more collaborative, and cooperative and willing colleagues.

When administrators understand an initiative and create supportive conditions to forward its goals, it aids in implementation (Fullan, 2007). Because I recognized the importance of gaining the support of the administration, I contacted my principal and vice principal about my plans before I initiated the changes. Both administrators were receptive to my ideas, offered their support, and agreed to be interviewed about the mentoring initiative. In addition, the district superintendent was aware and supportive of my research study. The significance of their cooperation was illustrated when I proposed my plan to new mentors and novices. Their first questions were whether administrators knew about the changes and were supportive of them. It was only when I affirmed that administrators were in support of the program that teachers became willing to participate. Without the support of my administrators, my initiative would likely have been less productive.

An important part of the success of any change is the organizational culture in which the change occurs (Fullan, 2001). Serendipitously, at the time I began to initiate the change, in conjunction with administrators, School Three teachers were continually striving to improve school culture and collegial interactions by building relationships while working on developing cohesion from within. According to Fullan (2001) the existence of positive relationships is the single factor common to every successful change. Given that relationships can make a difference in the adoption of an initiative, it is beneficial that School Three's faculty, with gentle pushes from administration, was already attempting to build a school culture based on collaboration and staff improvement. Gradually, the amount of time that staff spend talking about learning and student growth has increased as less time is spent discussing their personal

lives during school hours. This change has been fostered in several ways, including administrators promoting staff collegiality by encouraging peer classroom observations and allotting common planning time for most grade levels. In addition, the social committee hosts many events outside of school time to cultivate congenial relationships (with the hopes of leading to collegial relationships inside of school). Also, school-wide celebrations are expanding which bring families and faculty together after school hours. This has made me believe the school culture is becoming more positive and the willingness to implement a new mentoring program with the support of the school principal is further evidence that School Three is working towards building relationships through increased collaboration and staff improvement. Yet, the cooperation of a variety of staff members was a significant element of this change effort.

While school culture and support are important in any change there were a number of other factors that influenced the implementation of the new mentoring program. While initiating this change to the mentoring program, the participants voluntarily agreed to adopt the new components and the perceptions of mentors and novices of the new research-based mentoring program are embedded throughout the discussion of the findings. The participants' feedback is the underlying basis for addressing the research questions. The first portion of my findings report the preconditions of the mentoring program—the matching of dyads and the facilitator role. The last two sections address how the new elements of the mentoring program—classroom observations and mentor-novice meetings were carried out.

Preconditions of the Mentoring Program

Matching

In this study, the matching of mentors and novices had a significant impact on how each dyad carried out the process. The research suggests that a match between a novice and mentor

should be made based on certifications, schedules, and classroom locations (Barrera et al., 2010; Mullen, 2011). Optimally, the pair should be certified in the same area, have a common planning time, and teach in close proximity to each other; unfortunately, this research-based way of matching did not occur in the Loop District. Adelyn, the principal of School Three, reported that she tries to take the personalities of both teachers, their grade level, and scheduling into consideration when making a match, but unfortunately she cannot always make the ideal choice. This administrator faced obstacles, which hindered her from using best practices research to match dyads. At times, principals may face limitations in making decisions about matches because of the mentors they have available, or they may not even be aware of research on mentor-novice matches. Adelyn made decisions based on teachers' personalities and building locations but not on grade level because there were not mentors in the same grade level as every novice. During the study, two dyads did not get matched according to best research practices, although each worked hard to optimize the experience. The upcoming examples show that grade level, teaching schedules, and classroom location impacted each dyad, especially regarding their opportunity to meet regularly. The relationship of each dyad was distinct and played a role in how the mentoring was carried out. Variances in the pairs may suggest that they need different kinds of supports.

The impact of a less than ideal match had a significant impact on Dyad One's opportunity to meet. The teachers in Dyad One were from two non-contiguous grade levels, in two different buildings of the school, with opposite lunch schedules. Being in two different buildings limited the time they could spend together because one teacher always had to travel in order for them to meet. Additional difficulties emerged due to them teaching different grade levels. For example, Sally, a first grade novice reported, "I would be spending time with a third grade teacher, but

then also need to spend time with the first grade team, which is manageable, but it's a lot." This made time management difficult; the novice felt as if her time was spread too thin because she needed to meet with more people to get the help she needed. Additionally, when mentors and novices are not matched by grade level, it may be less likely that they will have similar schedules or common planning time when they could meet. It is clear that teaching in different grade levels created time constraints, which challenged Dyad One.

Not only is time an issue when not matched with the same grade level but also getting specific assistance regarding curriculum and students was difficult for Sally. Explaining about her experience of having been matched with a teacher who teaches two grade levels higher than her, Sally stated "... I feel [a first grade teacher] would have more of an idea of what to ask me and what to talk about because me being a first-year teacher, I have questions about everything." Any ideas, advice, or lesson plans which she got from her mentor had to be adapted for a first grade classroom in order for Sally to implement them. As a result, she had more work to do than if she and her mentor shared the same grade level curriculum. Additionally, this novice stated her belief that a same grade level mentor would be able to ask specific questions related to current curriculum content and be able to offer suggestions based on personal experience. Being matched with a mentor teaching at a different grade level can obviously be difficult, but this dyad made it work to the best of their ability. Because these two teachers had a previous relationship, put in the time and effort, and bonded well from the start, Sally felt she got a lot of help in spite of their different grade level assignments. Had the circumstances been different, perhaps their distance in location and grade level would have had a significantly negative impact on the experience.

Although this did not happen this past school year, all novices stressed the importance of having a mentor in the same grade level. If that is not possible, the novices suggested that a match should be made with a mentor in the grade level just above or below them. For instance, in Dyad Three, the mentor was one grade level above her novice. Although they did not teach the same grade, their classrooms were near each other and they had the same lunchtime. These circumstances seemed a helpful counterbalance to their teaching two different grade levels. Colleen, the novice in this dyad, observed that being matched with a teacher one grade level above her assignment allowed her and her mentor to do cross-grade level planning. Additionally, through their relationship, she gained a better understanding of what her students will need to know and be able to do in the next year which she felt was important and helpful. Vicky, the mentor, was able to alert the novice of expectations for the students. Their close proximity and common lunchtimes afforded them opportunities for informal encounters and discussions throughout the day.

The best example of a research-based match was Dyad Two. Paula and Liz taught the same grade level and their classrooms were near each other, although they were the only grade level to not have allotted common planning time. Both teachers reported that they benefited from this. In addition, both teachers had aides, which allowed the novice to quickly run over to the mentor's classroom to ask last minute questions or borrow supplies; for example, Paula reported, "whenever I needed to ask a question, lean on somebody, if there's something I wasn't sure of, or make sure I was following the activity the right way, I can always walk into my mentor teacher's room." Also, Liz was able to informally stop by to check on her assigned novice daily. Paula appreciated that her mentor could elaborate on professional development trainings she attended, and when they discussed curriculum, her mentor knew exactly what she

was talking about. Building a productive mentoring relationship seemed to be easier for this dyad because they shared the same curriculum, age group of students, and were closely located in the school, which aligns with suggestions from literature for an optimal match. This dyad was fortunate to have more elements in place than the others, but it is unclear which matching feature (grade level, common planning time, same lunch period, classroom location) outweighs the others in importance when they cannot all be present. The survey results showed that all participants except one mentor agreed that the logistics of grade level, schedule, and classroom location had a big impact on how often they met and the conversations during meetings.

Despite what is known about best practices, mentors and novices cannot always be ideally matched; however, when both people are willing to meet and be flexible, the chances of success are likely to increase. It seems that the nature of relationship building that occurs plays a substantial role as well. At least as important as intimate knowledge of the curriculum, novices said they need a mentor with whom they are comfortable talking during meetings in order for the relationship to develop. All novices and mentors built a relationship with each other outside of the formal mentoring program. Although varying in frequency, this led to questions being asked not only during meeting times but informally through handwritten notes, texts, and e-mails. As comfort increases and the relationship in dyads grows, it is the goal that two-way learning emerges and both teachers exchange ideas and contribute to knowledge building (Boreen et al., 2009; Moss, 2010). Despite the differences in the dyads, each teacher reported that they were able to gain benefits from participating in the mentoring relationship.

Facilitator

During the changes to the current mentoring program, participants indicated that my facilitation was an important element in its implementation. Specifically, all mentors and two

novices reported on the survey that the facilitator/ researcher role was important in them being able to implement the proposed components. The one novice who disagreed responded that she was “not sure,” which could mean she was unsure about the question or unsure about the impact my facilitation had on her carrying out the meetings and observations. I undertook various tasks such as arranging for observations, covering for classes during observations, providing the dyads with documents, and communicating informal reminders to enhance the mentoring relationship and attempt to increase their accountability to the program. This was done to align with Fullan’s (2007) assertion that having an implementation leader to guide an initiative is critical to its success. Effective leaders create a sense of purpose, use strategies to motivate people to tackle problems, hold people accountable, and are assessed by people’s intrinsic commitment to the change (Fullan, 2001). The subsequent sections describe my role as facilitator in supporting the process and addressing the obstacles encountered.

Scheduling observations. For the observation component of the program, I arranged, scheduled, and covered classes in order for them to take place. Teachers can become resentful and unwilling to participate in change initiatives when multiple concepts are presented to them with no support but the expectation of implementation. Providing classroom coverage and coordination was intended to give them time to and support to conduct peer observations. This meant the teachers did not have to use their prep periods to do them. I felt this was an important way to decrease resistance and negative feelings toward the initiative and increase the likelihood of success. Without having time allotted and coverage arranged, the opportunities for observation seemed extremely limited. My role was to make this possible, and the participants all reported that they valued the opportunity to participate in observations and wished there were more. One novice, Colleen stated, “I think that if there is time and that people can allow

coverage for teachers to go see other rooms, I think it's so good because it's not very often that we get to see different strategies in action."

Increasing accountability and monitoring. During the year of the study I was able to provide informal monitoring of the program and the participants found this helpful. The lack of a structured and formalized mentoring program in the District has caused some novice teachers in the past to feel unsupported and as if they were getting a "baptism by fire." Without someone organizing and monitoring mentoring in the district, certain components were easily overlooked or not included. When there is no one to hold teachers accountable for implementation, it is easy for initiatives to get ignored. This suggests the importance of someone being in place to oversee programs such as new teacher mentoring. A facilitator must assume that people need some pressure to change, but this will only be effective under the right conditions in which teachers can react, obtain assistance, and develop new capacities (Fullan, 2007); therefore, as a facilitator, although I did not have the authority to hold them accountable, I tried to communicate the value of the change, standards of practice, and the expectations for mentoring as a way to try to achieve the desired outcomes (Fullan, 2007). In addition, by developing and distributing the various documents designed to support the new mentoring program to the teachers (several times), I attempted to enhance mentor and novice accountability. Communicating with the teachers often and conducting one-legged interviews with novices regularly allowed me to monitor how the changes were being implemented and modify them accordingly.

Providing structures. As the facilitator, I developed and distributed various documents with the hopes of providing structure and increasing accountability in the mentoring program. First, I created the Observation and Reflection Log to offer the teachers guidance and a focus during pre and post-observation conferences. Although observations were already encouraged

for novices and mentors in the district, there was no structure or policy supporting this component of mentoring. With this Log, I hoped to assist the teachers in gaining the benefits of observation. Another document I created was the “Cheers and Fears” protocol, designed to encourage a responsive approach (Ganser, 1992; Tauer, 1996) in mentoring meetings. I reminded the teachers often about these documents and altered the Log based on their recommendations. Finally, I created a Tracking Log for the dyads to record their meetings times, contact hours, and topics covered so they could document their having met the state required 20 hours. I developed this because a mentor requested it; the district did not provide one. This was an effort to help the dyads be accountable and I tried to be there for the teachers when they had questions about mentoring, but I encountered some setbacks along the way.

Obstacles. Although I facilitated the observation component of the new mentoring program, I had multiple roles, which hindered the process and led to obvious challenges, which can and need to be alleviated if the mentoring program is to be sustained. Additionally, district structures impeded my capacity to support the program.

My multiple roles. Being a classroom teacher and researcher of this study, I struggled to fulfill some of the facilitation tasks. I could not always provide coverage at the time requested by the novice or mentor for observations because of my own duties as a classroom teacher. I had to use my prep periods to cover the classes and those times were restricted, as they did not always coincide with the participants’ schedules. Additionally, my services were not always available to make changes or provide documents at a moment’s notice, which is when they were sometimes requested. Also, I was a peer to the participants and needed to maintain a positive colleague status with them. As a colleague, I could not push so hard as to threaten our healthy relationships and wanted to keep our normal boundaries so as to not seem authoritative. Along

the same lines, I did not want to pressure them to do too much extra work that took up valuable time they needed to fulfill their usual teaching duties. Had I done so, it might have caused total resistance to the whole project. I have witnessed this resistance take place during previous initiatives in the district and wanted to avoid this occurrence at all costs.

As the researcher for this study, I wanted the participants to fully implement the new mentoring program; however, I did not want to artificially force full participation in every component, as I wanted to know what would happen under relatively normal circumstances. Only in this way would I gain understanding about what would be needed to sustain the initiative. This too meant that I had to find a sometimes difficult balance between gentle pressure and letting the situation run its course.

District structure. An ongoing concern was the District support towards a facilitator and research-based mentoring. Not matching the dyads until October hurt the facilitation process, as I did not get to start the school year as I planned. Modifications regarding timing and scheduling needed to be made before my initiative could even begin. I planned to conduct some activities in September including trust building exercises, which did not occur. Also, the observations were scheduled to begin in October then changed to November, but none of the dyads completed one until December. The district does not allot time for meetings or observations so that supporting this process fell to me as the facilitator; yet, as stated previously, my role as a teacher impeded my capacity to do this. Without any formal support or documentation of the process required by the district, any paperwork I asked the dyads to complete (not only for research purposes but to support the mentoring process) was potentially viewed as nothing more than extra work. It is likely that the teachers did not feel any real pressure to complete the documents provided as no one from the district that could hold them accountable for completion was asking for them.

“Seeing is Believing”

One goal of this study was to find out what happens when an observation component of a mentoring program, which encouraged critical reflection for mentors and novices, was implemented. Both observation and critical reflection were missing from the previous mentoring program. As I analyzed the data on the observation component of the program, themes surfaced regarding both the obstacles and the benefits of mentor and novice classroom observation. The specific themes that emerged from analysis that will be discussed in the following sections are staff willingness to accept the change needed to conduct observations, perceived benefits, and barriers to realizing those benefits.

Staff Onboard

Implementation of mentor-novice observations is by definition a collaborative activity. This activity was supported, in part, by School Three staff willingness to commit in many ways to altering the school culture and dynamic to move towards working together to improve learner outcomes, a change that was already in process. Evidence that teachers valued these changes emerged during their interviews when most of them referred in positive ways to Stephen Barkley, an advocate of peer observation, who had provided professional development to the staff members of School Three on several occasions. The staff at School Three continues to comment frequently on Stephen Barkley’s presentations and use his ideas to collaborate during staff meetings. Staff discussions about these professional development opportunities with Barkley and enactment of his observation suggestions showed they were accepting of the changes and seemed to limit the resistance towards shifting the school culture towards more collaboration.

Barkley asserted that observing colleagues and collaborating with staff helps improve school culture, but suggested that it is essential that certain procedures be in place for this to succeed. Because School Three was striving for improvement in the area of collaboration, my plan for mentoring in general, and observations in particular, was well aligned with a school-wide goal. Although there was a well-developed understanding about the elements of effective peer observation and general support for it, the administration had not taken any concrete action to facilitate this process and few to none were occurring on a regular basis. Taking suggestions from Barkley and research-based mentoring programs, the mentoring program I created for School Three included observation as a critical element. The goals of implementing observations in a new teacher mentoring program include novices being able to view effective teaching strategies and classroom management procedures (Shernoff et al., 2011) and mentors being able to offer advice based on the firsthand knowledge of seeing the novice in action in the classroom (Wong, 2002).

Although the proposed plan was revised regarding the frequency of observations and original documentation, participants reported that many benefits occurred because of observation. They also experienced challenges implementing the plan as it was originally designed. As a result of preliminary feedback and data analysis, the plan was adjusted. The following subsections describe the observation component of the mentoring program: the plan and the reality, and the obstacles and benefits of implementing it.

The Plan and the Reality

The original design called for an observation to occur every month beginning in November. I based that schedule on what I thought was feasible, making allowance for adjusting to the beginning of the school year and the time needed for the dyads to build the foundations of

their relationship. The planned schedule, starting in November, was for mentors and novices to switch off between being observed and observing during the first four months. During the last two months, novices could choose what type of observation would be most beneficial for them, including observing other colleagues in the school.

Given that articulating specific expectations and facilitating critical reflection are imperative to making observations a valuable mentoring activity (Boreen et al., 2009), I created the schedule as well as the Observation and Reflection Log for the teachers to use as a way to encourage a systematic approach to plan, observe, and reflect. I explained to the mentors and novices that they should first have a pre-observation conference using the Observation and Reflection Log as a planning document to establish an observation focus (e.g., an area in which the novice felt challenged or needed more information) and to be completed collaboratively before the observation. This document could then be used during the observation to record data and reflections related to the selected focus of the observation. During a debriefing meeting subsequent to the observation, observation notes recorded on the Log could be used again, this time to guide reflection and discussion about positive features of the observed lesson, potential areas for improvement, or new ideas gained from the process.

Pre-observation. Establishing guidelines and organizing for the observation during a pre-observation meeting are essential to receiving the benefits of participating in peer observation. These meetings should include planning, setting goals, and building trust as elements that can help make the process run smoothly and maximize the benefits (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998; Strong & Baron, 2004). In September, the teachers were given Observation and Reflection Logs with a brief explanation of how to use them, which could be utilized during each phase of the observation process, beginning with this planning meeting. Teachers received no

training in how to use the documents or how to fully support peer observation and reflective discussions. They were again distributed along with an explanation during the October matching meeting after the district officially listed the matches; the dyads, principal, vice principal, and I participated. According to survey results, all the dyads conducted some form of pre-observation meeting to select a focus for each observation and all teachers reported that it was helpful. These ranged from completing the Observation and Reflection Log to simply identifying a content area that would be observed.

Despite the range of ways in which the Log was used, the teachers reported that having a focus established before the observation took place was important. Dyad One used the Observation and Reflection Log as it was intended, as illustrated when they audio recorded their pre-observation conference before the mentor, Jane, observed Sally, the novice. Once they were matched, this dyad met weekly before the school day began for mentoring. The morning before their first observation, the dyad completed the pre-observation component of the Log and returned the original document to me after their post-observation conference. The session began with Sally discussing the challenges she was encountering and what content area she wanted Jane to observe. Specifically, Sally asked her mentor teacher to observe her guided reading group and literacy stations so that she could offer suggestions on how she could improve in these areas. Jane clarified and rephrased what Sally was seeking feedback on as they discussed the upcoming lesson while writing on the first page of the Log. For example, Jane asked Sally, “So you want me to watch what you’re doing and how you’re interacting and how [the lesson] was working with them and then you want feedback on how I can give you different lessons?” In this way, Jane and Sally were both aware of the area of focus to be observed during the lesson although it was pretty general. In spite of using the Log, the teachers did not discuss specific

questions or concerns that should drive the observation but rather only identified a general focus for the lesson.

Researchers have asserted that when observations are planned in advance, with clear expectations and guidelines, they tend to be more effective (Northwest Territory Teacher Induction, 2011). Although none of them used the Log to record decisions made during the pre-observation conference, all participants in Dyad Two and Three communicated to me that they discussed observations in advance. Novices chose what subject area and time to observe, but I do not know if they formally documented this arrangement or chose a specific area of focus (See Appendix D). Not surprisingly then, during one-legged interviews, one novice admitted that her first observation was not as helpful as she had hoped because the mentor did not teach the subject area that they had planned for her to observe. It was not particularly useful for her to observe the lesson she saw because the district had already provided her with professional development in this content area. I was under the impression that this dyad had a pre-observation conference to set a focus, but without documenting their plans in some way, there was confusion. Their planning was general and logistical rather than focused and substantive. This can detract from the potential benefits of doing observations given that Stanulis & Weaver (1998) state that without systematic and concrete planning the benefits of observation can be easily lost. In general, the dyads did not use the Logs, but did do some form of planning before the observation, although it did not seem to be generally very focused on specific areas of challenge.

The observation. To help facilitate the observation process and decrease the burden on the teachers as much as possible, I provided each dyad with classroom coverage when they were conducting observations during the study school year. All participants reported that they were

more than grateful that I covered their classes (during my prep periods), but the mentors particularly appreciated it because the district had never organized for classroom coverage for those participating in the mentoring program, and therefore little observation had previously occurred. They made clear that this assistance made observations far more feasible. Specifically, Jane stated, “If you did not have someone to cover your classes, probably the observation would have never happened.” In the past, teachers were sometimes willing to observe on their prep or lunch periods, but with the current demands on teachers, including the increase in paperwork they have to do, most teachers feel they have little time to complete additional tasks. The mentors made clear that providing classroom coverage was critical to their being able to do observations. It meant that doing observations would not be a tradeoff between fulfilling their mentoring and their own classroom responsibilities.

Although they did complete observations, none of the dyads stuck to the suggested schedule. In Dyad One the novice participated in three observations. She observed her mentor (who did not teach the same grade as the novice), was observed by her mentor, and observed a grade level colleague. In Dyad Two, the novice also participated in three observations. She observed her mentor twice and was observed once by her mentor. In Dyad Three, the novice participated in four observations. She observed and was observed by her mentor, observed a teacher skilled in literacy stations (an area of particular interest to her), and observed a grade level colleague (this was scheduled by the district as training for a new curriculum starting the next school year for that grade level only). Although the number of observations that was conducted was more than was typical in School Three, it was about half the number suggested in the initial plan.

Through one-legged interviews I learned that all novice teachers wanted to observe their mentors first. They reported that this was due to feeling nervous and apprehensive about having an experienced teacher in their classrooms given that their relationships with each other were still new and the novices lacked confidence. For example, Paula explained that she wanted to make a good impression on her mentor when she was observed. Therefore she felt some pressure and hesitation about the process. Along the same lines, Sally reported, “I went and saw [my mentor’s lesson] first, which I really enjoyed because it made me a little more comfortable to have her come in and see mine.” After observations take place, a post-observation conference to reflect helped complete the process and make the time spent more valuable.

Post-observation. The dyads varied in the ways they carried out the post-observation conference, although all seemed to engage in some form of reflection after the observed lesson. All teachers felt meeting as soon as possible after the observation was important but only some pairs were able to do that. Dyad One was able to immediately reflect after both observations they did together. Because of the timing, what they had observed was fresh in their minds when they met. Their reflections appeared to be specific and worthwhile probably due to the procedural steps (pre-and post-conference were both documented) they completed. Additionally, when Sally was observed, they scheduled an additional post-observation conference a week later so as to audio record the meeting and generate data for the study. During this session, they reflected on the lesson, which generated new teaching ideas, and spoke concretely about how their teaching was altered due to the observation. Dyad Three reflected shortly after the lesson but did not use any specific format. Although Dyad Two did not use the Log, they reflected right after their lesson and each took notes to help them recall details and guide the post-observation discussion. Paula and Liz took notes while they observed each other, and both reported to me

separately that they enjoyed the opportunity and were looking forward to meeting with each other to reflect and clarify concepts based on the notes taken. However, at least once, they did not meet until about a week after the observation. Paula stated that she and her mentor met as close to the lesson as feasible. The teachers suggested it would be most helpful to meet closer to when the lesson occurred because ideas and questions would be fresher in their minds.

Overall the dyads demonstrated that the Observation and Reflection Log does not have to be completed and collected for teachers to engage in observations that are worthwhile to them. Dyad Two did not use the Log, but they offered another example of how the post-observation reflection was completed. While observing her mentor's lesson, Paula took notes so she could record different activities used to implement the curriculum. The audiotape of the dyad's debriefing sessions indicated that the novice benefited from reflecting on the notes she took when observing her seasoned mentor teaching curriculum identical to hers. During the post-observation meeting, as they reflected on the mentor's lesson, Paula asked several questions about her grade-level mentor's teaching and concepts that she was still unsure about. For example, Paula asked Liz questions such as, "How do you introduce certain topics? What hands-on materials can you use? How should the pictures I saw in your lesson be displayed?" Liz was able to explain what she did at the beginning of her lesson and why this was a useful technique to build students' excitement for the story they were about to hear. Paula also asked her mentor about resources used during the lesson she observed that were specific to their grade level. Although she had these resources in her classroom, she was unsure how and when to use them. Liz gave Paula information about the resources and where to look for certain books that she would need. This thorough clarification and precise response could have only been offered by someone familiar with the second grade curriculum and standards, thus demonstrating that

grade-level matching between novice and mentor is beneficial. During our interview, Paula said that she was grateful to have observed the strategies that Liz used because they were new to her, thus showing a benefit of observation. While Paula got new ideas about how to do things, there was no evidence of reflectiveness or substantive talk about teaching and learning; it was very informational about implementing a particular curriculum and how to use specific instructional resources. These topics are not unimportant, but this type of talk stays on the surface of teaching and is a missed opportunity to delve into the complexities of meeting the needs of all children.

Giving these teachers time to talk, reflect, and collaborate one-on-one was critical to increasing the potential benefits of observation. Furthermore, the teachers that taught the same grade level were able to heighten the learning process as both teachers were implementing the same curriculum. Despite the fact that they did not all use the Log to plan or reflect on an observed lesson, they adopted their own procedure of meeting for a pre and post-observation conference, which strengthened the novices' potential for learning. Exact procedures seem to matter less than whether the observation takes place. Although if procedures for encouraging reflection had really been followed, the conversations may have been more substantive, as it was, they really stayed on the surface. The extent to which specific protocols and structures make the observation more valuable for the teachers involved is beyond the scope of this study, but it is possible that the nature of talk before and after observations would have been different had the protocol been used effectively to encourage reflection. On the other hand, the information novices gained from observations during this study was more than they would have had without any procedures in place.

The novices all reported that they appreciated when mentors began the post-observation meeting with positive comments about what they were doing well before approaching areas that

needed improvement. For example, when mentors started the conversations with something such as, “I like how you did this part, but don’t forget you can add this” or other supportive conversation starters, it helped create a feeling of safety and confidence, and establish rapport. Colleen, the novice teacher from Dyad Three, called this approach “positively critiquing” and appreciated the gentle pushes she received from her mentor. In the same way, the novices began post-observation conferences with their mentors constructively by reviewing techniques they learned from the veteran teachers. From the information I gathered, the novices never really critiqued the mentors, which could be because the mentors did not ask for this or the novices did not feel comfortable in doing so, but they did offer the mentors supplemental materials used with their classes and shared ideas. The observation component demonstrated a way both teachers could learn and improve practice within their dyad relationship.

The Observation and Reflection Log. Although the novice teachers did not submit any Observation and Reflection Logs from when they observed their mentors, they all reported on the survey that they were used sometimes. Their positive comments during interviews about the Log suggest that they used them to establish a focus and serve as a guide during the post-conference.

During interviews each novice stated that the document helped them focus, pay close attention to, and concentrate on a specific skill or area while observing. Specifically, Sally, like the other novices, indicated that she was familiar with the Log and made reference to using it before doing an observation to get her focused, but did not use it to record ideas or information during the lesson. Additionally, although the novice teacher in Dyad Three, did not hand in the Log, she spoke about the value of the Log in her interview by stating that:

It was good as an outline for ourselves so that we have an idea of what we really want to see because there is so much in the classroom that you can’t see, and I think if you zero in

on what you want to see, it's clearer. You have an objective of why you're going there and what you want to see, as opposed to looking and getting sidetracked from all that's going on.

In addition to keeping the observer focused, having the Observation and Reflection Log also alleviated some of the novices' fears about having the mentors observe their teaching because it limited the looking (and feedback) to a specific area for focus. By providing the teachers with the Log (whether it was used at the time or not), all teachers were aware that the observation should be narrowed to a particular area (Appendix D) determined by both teachers through dialogue, rather than being a "fishing expedition" from which comments could be made about anything that happened during the visit. By using the Log to prompt this focus, the conversation after the observation was viewed by the novice teachers as more constructive than critical as well as more predictable and less threatening. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the Log not only asked the teachers to determine a focus, but also prompted the observer to list positive components of the lesson before moving on to ways to help the teaching grow in the area of focus.

Not only did the Log help dyads select a focus for the observation but also guided discussions during the post-conference. Dyad One used the document I created and it was clear during their post-observation conference that it guided reflection. Jane, the mentor from Dyad One also spoke positively when she discussed her use of the Observation and Reflection Log as a tool. She completed and handed in the Observation and Reflection Log, as it was designed, while other mentors instead chose simply to take notes during the observation. Not only did Jane find the document a useful tool to help her stay focused during the observation, but it also helped create a comfortable context for reflection during the post-observation discussion. Because she had taken detailed notes, she felt the discussion in the debriefing was substantive, and therefore

more meaningful than she had experienced in the past. Jane shared that previously when novices were asked to express their thoughts, they would avoid saying very much, responding with “I don’t know, what do you think?” In other words, rather than reflecting or offering opinions, novices had looked to Jane for her thoughts and comments. Along the same lines, novices would say “Oh it was great!” about any lessons they observed instead of offering constructive feedback. However, during the study year she found the post-observation conversations were specific to and based solely on the focus of the observed lessons. She believed that the Log promoted this more insightful dialogue. During interviews both teachers in Dyad One stated that they felt that the Observation and Reflection Log promoted learning and enhanced the benefits of observation.

Obstacles

Although classroom coverage was offered to the teachers, obstacles arose making it difficult to complete the planned number of observations. It turned out that coverage was necessary, but not sufficient for a full schedule of observations to occur or to complete the pre and post-observation conferences. The teachers were not given coverage to complete the Observation and Reflection Log, which may have been one reason for its lack of use (no time). Additional reasons for not always using the Log were teachers not being able to readily find it when needed or that feeling that taking informal notes was easier and good enough. Participants reported that demands from the district related to testing, professional development days, report cards, and school-wide events made it difficult to do monthly observations even with classroom coverage available. For example, teachers were called away from their classrooms to be trained in different teaching strategies or new curriculum throughout the year. This meant they had to play “catch up” when they returned and were reluctant to take more time away. Additionally, students were assessed more frequently than in prior years, which also threw teachers off their

regular schedules. This schedule disruption was problematic in planning observations in specific content areas because it changed the schedule of when subjects that teachers wanted to observe were taught. Teacher absences, scheduling conflicts, and district demands added to the difficulty of organizing observations and hindered the dyads from doing the number of observations that had been planned.

Another obstacle emerged when novices were not matched with a mentor teaching at the same grade level. This meant they sometimes wanted to observe teachers other than their mentors. Given that the principal encouraged observations, this non-mentor was willing; it was just a matter of receiving her schedule and setting up a time to be observed that worked for the three of us. However, a pre and post-observation conference with this teacher, who was not a mentor, was nearly impossible and required an extra time commitment from her, someone who had no particular investment to the novice or my study. This obstacle could be avoided if dyads were matched by grade level.

The multiple roles I played in this study may also have affected the number of observations that were conducted, as I mentioned earlier. As the facilitator of the new mentoring program, I had to arrange the observations and provide the classroom coverage myself. I tried to balance my role between providing “pressure and support” (Fullan, 2001, p.16). I focused my role on supporting the dyads, as best I could, to be able to complete a certain number of observations, but I was unable to require them to complete the observations when and as often as I proposed. This may also have contributed to their doing fewer than planned.

The Benefits: A Good Look

All of the dyads participated in observations. Overall, the teachers reported that the observation process was beneficial. Although the specific ways in which they implemented the

procedures for the observation component of the mentoring program varied, they all did follow the general procedure of doing a pre-observation meeting, an observation, and a post-observation meeting (at least most of the time). Members of each dyad reported that they gained new, useful ideas and substantive experiences by observing each other's lessons; however, Stanulis and Ames (2009) argue that to make the observation component a true learning experience, it is important to critically reflect after seeing the lesson. Consistent with research on observations between mentors and peers (Boreen et al., 2009), teachers reported that the closer this post-observation meeting was to the observed lesson, the more helpful the reflection; when the dyads were unable to meet directly after the lesson (due to scheduling conflicts), both teachers stated that the reflective process was hindered. In addition, the more they followed the recommended procedure the more reflective and substantive their post-observation conference was.

The School Three vice-principal supports the observation process as a mentoring tool, focusing in particular on novices observing their mentors, because it gives them an opportunity to view a seasoned colleague, giving new teachers a benchmark for excellent instruction. This is particularly important because many new teachers have little or no experience viewing effective teaching. Pre-service training often fails to fully prepare novice teachers for the authentic classroom experience; observations of experienced teachers seem to help fill the gap by creating opportunities for guidance and scaffolding in many dimensions (Northwest Territory Teacher Induction, 2001; Sava, 2010). Specifically, the benefits for novices, the mentors, and the broader school staff are discussed here in more detail.

Novices. When observing their mentors, novices reported that they had the opportunity to see things in a new light by going outside their classroom walls and beyond what they could read in a book. For example, Paula reported that she enjoyed seeing her mentor, who was

teaching in the same grade level, “in action” as she implemented the curriculum. In addition to having the benefit of seeing her mentor teach, this novice also valued the opportunity to ask her mentor questions for clarification about the lesson before and after the observation. Both teachers were lucky to be provided with full-time aides, which gave them the time to step out of their classroom and reflect collaboratively on the experience. Paula explained that she benefited from the observation because it enabled her:

To go in there and observe how my mentor teacher did the activity with the children. I can actually see it with my eyes and hear everything and [then] go back and, not copy, but go back and do the same thing and understand it better.

Seeing the teaching practices of a veteran teacher helped give Paula new ideas and allowed her to watch what she had only read about in textbooks and manuals. In another example, Sally stated that seeing her mentor in action offered a different perspective on teaching that went beyond explanations and enabled her to understand more about the teaching method she observed. Research shows that mentors have the potential to model best practices and offer novice teachers examples (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998) and this is what occurred as a result of observations and post-observation meetings.

During observations, the novice teachers saw a wide variety of practices in their mentors’ classrooms; they learned about new instructional strategies and materials they could use in their classrooms. Following observations, all of the novices reported that they incorporated at least one new strategy into practice that they had observed their mentor utilizing. For example, Sally stated that she started using the fluency passages and other reading materials that her mentor used during the lesson she had observed and which they then discussed during the post-observation conference:

I remember one specific thing was reading fluency. My mentor showed me the Reading A to Z site and how to get—I actually have them right here—the fluency passages. Then

she actually outlined for me where the kids would read and stop to help with the fluency, and then how to get extra stories and stuff that are leveled to print off the website and stuff like that.

She learned how to use a resource rather than just having to refer to a website with no explanation. This was in contrast to what happens far too often throughout the District; beginning teachers are given curriculum and manuals to read without clarification or assistance on how to actually implement them. In another example of a novice learning from observing her mentor, Colleen stated that she appreciated the opportunity to observe her mentor, who teaches a grade level above her, in part because it enabled her to learn more about the future expectations for her current students. Novice teachers have many struggles their first year and can benefit from watching veteran teachers (Roberson & Roberson, 2009). Colleen affirmed her thoughts about the importance of observation when she said, “You can sit and have these meetings and talk about I do this, that works and that, but you don’t really know it until you see it.” When novices observed their mentors, they were able to see how concepts and curriculum can be enacted. Then they had the opportunity in post-observation meetings to ask questions about what they had seen in order to more fully understand how to implement the lesson. The staff was able to directly reap the advantages of observation and this likely helped build their commitment to changing the mentoring process (Fullan, 2001). All the novices reported that they gained from the experience of observing more seasoned teachers.

Not only do the novices agree that observing their mentors is helpful, they also asserted that they learned a lot by being observed by them as well. The novice teachers agreed that having their mentors observe them was significant. For example, Sally said, “I think the best part about it was actually having my mentor come in and observe my lesson.” She stated that because so many things go on throughout the day and teachers are pulled in so many directions,

it is difficult to remember everything that has occurred for discussion during meeting time. But when Jane observed her, they were able to reflect on tangible information and Jane was able to give her specific strategies based on evidence she gathered while watching her novice's lesson. Having the chance to hear Jane's feedback that was specific to a lesson she had actually taught was an unparalleled experience. Paula also stated that the post-observation conference with her mentor was helpful because it showed her where she needed to improve and gave her concrete suggestions on how to do that. Liz's advice at times caused Paula to directly alter her lessons to make the learning more challenging and engaging for her students.

Mentors. Not only did novices report benefits of observing their mentors but the mentors reported that they benefited from observing novices as well. The primary benefit was being able to give feedback based on what was actually happening in the novice's classroom. Observation yields a better understanding of the problems a novice is facing as it is informed by firsthand experience rather than the novices' interpretation or the mentors' assumptions about the challenges and struggles she is encountering. Specifically, Jane described the observation component as extremely helpful, an experience from which both teachers gained a lot and the most important change that was made to the mentoring program at School Three. She explained that in the past, when mentoring was not organized around observations, it was difficult for her to help solve a novice's problems because of not being able to see what was going on in her classroom; however during the study year, having observations organized for the teachers gave the mentors firsthand knowledge about the novice's practice, which they could use to tailor the help they provided according to the new teachers' needs. Vicky, the mentor from Dyad Three, noted how helpful it was to have a real picture of her novice's classroom and students as they reflected on the lessons rather than having to try to create an image in her mind as her novice

spoke about the day. Similar to Jane, it was easier for her to reflect and offer Colleen advice based on what she witnessed rather than just on what she was told.

Not only did the experience allow mentors to offer their novices direct advice but they also found the experience stimulating. Liz explained that she appreciated gaining new ideas from her novice and the opportunity to reflect on practice collaboratively:

I definitely think the observations were helpful in both ways for me to go in to a new classroom and see maybe some new ideas as well as gathering ideas from her and her to come into my classroom and then we can reflect on them together and share our experiences and help each other out.

Similarly, Vicky reported that doing observations not only helped her be a more effective mentor, but it was worthwhile for her as well. Being in her assigned novice's classroom gave her new activities that she could use such as a reading a certain book to her students that she had seen Colleen use.

Overall value of observations. Teachers repeatedly emphasized the benefits of observation and how much it heightened the mentoring experience for both the novices and mentors. On the survey, all mentors and novices reported the observation component were very helpful. As a novice teacher, Colleen appreciated the chance to observe her mentor and wished for additional opportunities to do so in other veteran teachers' classrooms. Specifically, she thought it would be advantageous for novices to observe teachers who taught one grade level above and one grade level below as a way to know more about where her students were going and coming from.

Based on the interview data, it seems clear that there is a shared understanding about the advantages of observation among various staff, which is coupled with the suggestion that it be implemented in future District mentoring endeavors. Colleen stated, "Modeling is the best way to learn." I think all novices would concur because others also reported that they gained new

ideas, reflected on practice, or checked that they were following the curriculum appropriately as an outcome of the observation component. The mentors also found the observations advantageous; specifically, Jane said it made mentoring easier as she had the opportunity to see teaching firsthand and offer hands-on advice. I can conclude that although there were obstacles to implementing the observation component of the plan, many benefits were obtained. When coverage is provided for teachers to participate in a scheduled observation it is an effective part of mentoring. Completing the pre and post-conference meetings as close to the actual observation increases those benefits.

The dyads reported that observation enhanced the mutually beneficial relationship and the two-way learning opportunities. Observation was a key element in changing the mentoring process at School Three because it encouraged teachers to exchange knowledge to improve practice that was specifically related to what was actually happening in their classrooms and to their everyday, actual needs. Despite the fact that the number of observations completed was modest, all participants reported that they were valuable and wanted more occasions to enter each other's classroom for these firsthand experiences. However, the number of observations they actually completed provides information about the feasibility of the design. Even with the scheduled observation and coverage provided, dyads still completed less than the amount proposed. It can be inferred that the amount planned was not the issue as the teachers requested more opportunities to observe. The design in place allowed for some observations to occur but there was a lack of capacity for complete implementation which gives rise to implications addressed in chapter five.

Meetings Matter

In addition to offering a more systematic and facilitated approach to observation, another element designed for this study was a specific structure for mentoring meetings. The need for this was demonstrated by the fact that past dyad experiences varied significantly from novice to novice depending on how this one-on-one time was used. An effective mentoring program provides mentors and novices with time to talk, collaborate, and explore content by communicating about practice (Stanulis & Ames, 2009). However, without a particular format for doing this, a meeting may not be especially constructive; therefore, a meeting structure was designed to encourage substantive talk about the novices' challenges and concerns, school procedures and policies, curriculum implementation, and teaching practices. Mentoring meetings are an important strategy to help teachers break out of isolation and engage in open communication to benefit themselves and contribute to school improvement. Numerous factors influenced the implementation of meetings for the new mentoring program. The upcoming sections describe the proposed plan for implementing meetings, what actually happened, and the obstacles that influenced their implementation. The last two sections describe how the mentors' approaches affected the mentoring meetings and dynamics.

The Plan

Research suggests that dyads should be matched before the school year starts so the mentor can help the novice acclimate to the new environment, discuss any school or district procedures for the first days, and ease new teacher jitters (Boreen et al., 2009). However, in School Three, the teachers were not officially notified about who their partners were until October although informally the dyads were set. As far as I know, central office did not contact the teachers or the school, for the mentoring to begin until that time. I approached the dyads in October about meetings and each already had a time and day set for once a week meetings, so I

did not suggest a schedule. I would have suggested that they meet approximately once a week, based on need. Although research states frequent dyad meetings lead to success in a mentoring program (Boreen et al., 2009), the term “frequent” is not specifically defined; however, I believed once a week was sufficient, as that worked for me while I was being mentored, and that seems to be what most teachers in the district regard as ideal, especially in the beginning months of the school year.

Cheers and fears. In the past, the District lacked guidelines and structures regarding the form and content of mentoring meetings. Through conversation and informal observation, I found that this lack of structure contributed to an inconsistent mentoring experience, depending on what mentor they were assigned and what that veteran teacher’s preferred approach to providing support was. The meetings were not always meaningful or worthwhile, if they took place at all. Therefore, I decided it was important to provide some structure for meetings. The key tool I selected for this was the “Cheers and Fears” protocol (Ganser, 1992).

Mentoring relationships are shown to be more successful when mentors respond to the immediate needs and concerns of their novices (Tauer, 1996). Therefore, I adopted the “Cheers and Fears” protocol (Ganser, 1992) to offer a consistent procedure for meetings to encourage this. In addition, I believed that it could also help the teachers engage in meaningful, substantive discussions. This protocol, which I produced in a one-page document, asks the novice to record approximately three things that went well (cheers), three areas in need of improvement (fears), or any other thoughts they wanted to share since the dyads’ last meeting (Ganser, 1992). The novices were encouraged to complete the form before each mentoring meeting so that the dyad would have a jumping off point for their conversations. It was given to each teacher several times throughout the year in an effort to promote its use and enhance the mentors’ ability to be

responsive to the novices. However, because teachers have access to the photocopy machine in the building, I did not think I needed to give them a new copy of the protocol every week. I felt by doing so, I would seem too forceful in promoting the protocol's use and this would not give me a real picture of its implementation or sustainability.

The Reality and Obstacles

Once the dyads were officially matched and began meeting in October, one mentor asked me for a log to document their meetings so they could demonstrate that they had fulfilled the required 20 hours of dyad meeting time. Because they were not required by the district to document their meeting hours, nothing existed to serve this purpose. In response, I created and distributed a Tracking Log to all dyads which they could use to record their meeting days, times, and topics. The upcoming sections describe meeting frequency and the use of the "Cheers and Fears" protocol as the central elements in promoting effective mentoring meetings.

Meeting frequency. The frequency of the dyad's scheduled meetings decreased as the school year progressed. The dyads all began meeting once a week after being matched in October, but by December the meetings had become less frequent. Due to difficulties with availability, everyday teaching concerns, timing, and scheduling, their original once a week plan was not sustained. By the second half of the year, Dyad One had stopped meeting altogether, as the mentor had gone out on disability. This novice was never assigned a new mentor, but said in her interview that she was informally mentored by her grade level colleagues and the school literacy support teacher. The other two dyads went from weekly meetings, to meeting about every other week, to just some now and then, quick conversations in the hall unless specific concerns or questions arose. This information was reported through interviews, as no dyad returned the Tracking Logs, although according to the survey all teachers reported that they used

them and found them helpful. The dyads' decreased meeting frequency over the course of the school year could be seen as an expected occurrence. One cause may have been district demands that left less time for the dyads to meet. Another was that novices seemed to have less immediate concerns as the school year went on and beginning struggles lessened as new teachers became more comfortable.

The novices reported that they sometimes prepared for their mentoring meetings by writing down specific questions for their mentors to address or brought student work to discuss. Based on interview reports, the topics of the regularly scheduled meetings included curriculum planning and implementation, primarily in language arts, professional development workshops presented by the district, opportunities for socializing with colleagues, how to acquire supplies, differentiating instruction and other general pedagogical topics, student grade retention, and discipline or classroom management issues. These concepts were discussed during meetings, but because none of the pairs gave me their Tracking Logs, it is unknown how much time was spent on each topic.

Cheers and fears. Meeting structure and topics discussed varied amongst dyads, as did documentation of the process. Two of the mentor teachers reported that the novices used the "Cheers and Fears" document in the beginning of the year, but as time went on it was not used. Even in the beginning, it was not utilized at every meeting, and none were returned to me. The survey results regarding the use of this document were wide-ranging; one novice reported that "Cheers and Fears" was helpful, one mentor and a novice reported the document as somewhat helpful, one mentor was not sure, and the third mentor and novice (from the same dyad) responded that it was not used. The mixed responses can give rise to possible implications addressed in chapter five.

In the beginning, having the structure of the “Cheers and Fears” protocol seemed helpful to all dyads. However, participants reported that it became unnecessary as time went on. According to Dyad One, “Cheers and Fears” trained them to use the structure without having to actually fill out the form. For example, Jane reported that having a dialogue about positive and negative issues became “second nature,” as a result of using the protocol in the beginning. Similarly, her novice, Sally, said they would automatically start by talking about current concerns and new strategies that went well.

The reasons why they stopped using (or never used) the “Cheers and Fears” protocol varied amongst dyads. According to the novice in Dyad Two, one reason they discontinued use was that it was inconvenient to do so. The “Cheers and Fears” document was not available when questions came to Paula’s mind. Rather than searching for it, she had a journal, which she kept on her desk, where she wrote down questions that arose during teaching. This gave Liz something specific to respond to when she met with Paula; it is unknown if Paula shared her cheers as well. Dyad Three reported that, as their relationship developed, the formal structure of writing things down became superfluous; they reported that conversation evolved more organically without any prompting. Additionally, as the novice’s confidence increased, she felt more comfortable simply sharing her concerns because this led to more natural conversations than was possible when she wrote questions down. Then, she felt like she was reading from a script. Although not continued throughout the year, the participants indicated that it was valuable for them to have the “Cheers and Fears” document at the beginning of the year because it helped establish a structure for meetings.

Although participants reported using a structure prompted by the “Cheers and Fears” protocol, not using the actual protocol may have made for less effective mentoring meetings. In

general, the idea of focusing on successes and challenges as promoted by the “Cheers and Fears” protocol evolved into novices asking questions. It is assumed the questions asked during meetings by the novices were very much in the “how to” realm. While getting these kinds of questions answered is very important, they are not as likely to spark the kind of deep, meaning-making type discussions that coming with the “Cheers and Fears” protocol completed could. This point may be evidenced by one mentor reporting that at times the conversation during meetings lacked depth. She seemed unable to address this problem and wondered if she was attending to the novice’s concerns. Perhaps using some kind of structure or protocol would have promoted more in-depth conversation, caused the novice to communicate her personal questions more clearly, or guided the mentor’s responses.

Due to the fact that no documentation from meetings was handed in, it is difficult to know if novices always had questions written down in advance or if they arose naturally through conversation. It can be assumed that novices did not always come with written, prepared questions as mentors stated that if their novices did not come to meetings with questions, they felt that they had nothing to share with them and assumed their novices had no questions or concerns. It was clear to me, however, that the novices did have questions. During one-legged interviews with them they often asked me questions more appropriate for their mentor. This suggested that there was some break down in expectations about what should happen during mentoring meetings; using the recommended structure may have helped. Another possibility is that the novices knew I was involved in the mentoring so they would ask me questions rather than wait until they saw their mentor, which suggests that perhaps more informal contact needs to be encouraged between dyad members. Judging from the teachers’ feedback, I think the “Cheers and Fears” activity could have provided a format and allowed the meeting to be more

beneficial in responding to their needs if it had been used more faithfully. Even though the mentors and novices claimed that they used the “Cheers and Fears” protocol to establish a routine for meetings, they also demonstrated that they were somewhat unsatisfied with the content of the meetings and that when they stopped using it their conversations narrowed to question and answer sessions. It is not possible to know if the “Cheers and Fears” format itself was not as helpful as it could have been or if not using it faithfully limited its effectiveness.

Moves Mentors Make to Support Novice Learning

Despite the effort to add structure and consistency to the mentoring meetings this year by giving the dyads a Tracking Log and the “Cheers and Fears” protocol, there was still much variation in the quality and quantity of mentoring support. Several factors played a part in how mentoring meetings were implemented. A significant influence on the implementation of the mentoring meetings was the mentors themselves and their definition of and approach to implementing the role. The novices’ ideas about being mentored and their roles and responsibilities seemed to have minimal impact on the dynamic, as it appeared they followed the lead and structure that their mentors provided. Based on what I observed and data gathered during one-legged and formal interviews, it seemed as though the mentors set the tone for meetings along with their personality and schedules. The mentors all employed similar strategies but each employed varying degrees of knowledge, approaches, and role definitions to guide the relationship in their own ways, which shaped the novices’ experiences. The upcoming sections describe different methodologies all the mentors incorporated into the dyad meetings. They created a context in which they offered affective support and pedagogical knowledge and encouraged a mutual exchange of ideas.

Affective Support

The veteran teachers were able to build productive relationships by providing affective support to the novices with whom they were matched. The affective quality of the relationship is important because mentor teachers should develop collegial and trusting relationships with novice teachers (NJDOE, 2008). That the mentors all did this was evidenced by novices' reports. They stated that because the mentors were positive, patient, and understanding, it helped them feel at ease during meetings. For instance, Paula observed that novices feel nervous at first and want to make a good impression, but will make mistakes. Therefore, they need a mentor who they can be honest with and not feel judged by when they speak openly about their challenges. Clearly new teachers need someone who understands their apprehensions and is willing to help them relax and have a fun time so they can be open to learning. One strategy that most mentors used to begin building this kind of relationship was to discuss school policies, procedures, rules, and clubs during meeting time. Staying focused on relatively superficial school-wide topics, without pushing the boundaries too early, helped to establish rapport without making the novices feel exposed before trust was established. After a short time, they began to have more substantive discussions regarding curriculum, students, and personal concerns. Through interviews I learned that novices wanted a mentor to trust, with whom they could discuss issues in confidence, and who would offer a veteran's honest advice without judgment. An effective mentor makes the novice aware that information shared will stay between them and that he or she should feel free to ask any question, which encourages trust in the dyad relationship to grow.

In an effort to build the relationship, at times, mentors showed their vulnerable sides by sharing areas they still need to improve and trusting their novices with their own challenges. This can increase the dyad bond (Boreen et al., 2009) because novices appreciate mentors who are still willing to learn. Colleen affirmed this when she reported that when Vicky mentioned

her struggles to employ the best teaching strategies, it made her feel at ease. It gave her comfort to know that even veteran teachers are constantly working to improve lessons, and no perfect plan exists that works every year with every student. Hearing this and knowing that her mentor is a learner as well as an expert helped her to open up and ask for help. It seems likely that modeling that practice can always be enhanced, no matter your level of experience, helps many teachers open up to share their struggles and challenges. Perhaps because of Vicky's willingness to disclose her own challenges, Colleen became increasingly more comfortable with her mentor. She reported that the bond they created made her feel she could trust her mentor with confidential information. She illustrated this by saying:

She said that she's been in teaching ... for a long time and she still deals with certain things. She still struggles with the best strategies to use, and there is never the perfect [solution] in how we have to supplement. Just knowing her right off the bat, [because] she was able to tell me that, okay, I know I can be myself and I know I can just be open and that I'll be accepted because we're always learning as teachers anyway.

Teachers are ongoing learners; being willing to make this apparent to novices puts them in a better position to share and open up with their mentors.

Mentors reported that they took other explicit actions that contributed to the growth of the relationship and built trust. For example, Vicky reported that she strived to make Colleen feel comfortable from the start by trying to find all the positives and point out all the strengths in the novice's teaching and ideas. Based on experience, she had learned that providing a lot of praise helped build rapport and increase the comfort level between a novice and mentor. Vicky also expressed that she made conscious efforts to ask for Colleen's opinions, thus demonstrating her respect for the novice as a teacher. Her approach seemed to have been successful; Colleen reported that she sensed that Vicky genuinely appreciated her as a valued colleague when she asked for her opinion.

Camaraderie also increased in the dyads as the trust was built and the relationship grew. Vicky emphasized the importance of establishing confidentiality and worked at trying to help Colleen feel comfortable asking questions by making clear that the discussions would go no further than the two of them. Along the same lines, the Dyad Two mentor, Liz, used comedy to increase the comfort level between her and her novice. Paula reported that she felt more at ease as her mentor used humor and fun jokes during the meetings. Moreover, making it an enjoyable experience resulted in building a better relationship between them. Liz demonstrated that she consciously worked at building a productive relationship with her novice when she stated, “My goal was to make [Paula] feel comfortable to come to me at any point.” It quickly became clear to Paula that Liz was available to answer quick questions and she utilized her as a resource when small concerns arose throughout the day. The potential to do this was strengthened by the proximity of their classrooms. Paula stated, “[Liz] was always there to help.” Building trust may be difficult, but their experience demonstrates that mentors can take specific steps to encourage it, which results in the dyads talking to one another more freely during meetings.

Mentors agreed that having a trusting relationship enhances their ability to support the novices. For example, Jane observed that when the novice is comfortable enough to ask her questions, it is easier for her to help. When this did not happen in the past, she experienced mentoring as being much like “pulling teeth.” However, during the study year she developed a close relationship with her novice. She did have a previous relationship with her novice and both their personalities were open and talkative, although the mentor believed that the structure and documents provided during the study year aided in building trust between them. This was evidenced when Sally would preface comments to her with phrases like “off the record...” indicating that she trusted her mentor to keep their meetings confidential. As the relationship

developed, the topics they talked about evolved from policies and procedures to more challenging questions about specific students or parents. It is important that a mentor be personable and create an atmosphere in which novices feel comfortable sharing their fears and challenges in order that they get the help desired. When they do so, it enhances the potential of mentors to give them the support they need. While it is up to the novices to ask for assistance, it seems clear that the mentors must put in the effort to build a relationship in which they are comfortable to do so.

Not only is it important to help the novice feel comfortable, but the novices reported that a valued mentor is an experienced teacher that offers them solutions that are responsive to their concerns. Tauer (1996) defined a responsive mentor as someone who provides assistance by responding to the immediate needs and expectations of the novice during regularly scheduled meetings. Vicky, a veteran mentor, demonstrated a responsive approach by facilitating mentoring meetings during the study year that were informal conversations. She reported that she would simply ask how Colleen's day went. The novice often responded with immediate concerns; then they would work together to identify solutions to address them. Another mentor expressed a preference for a responsive approach when she asserted that she is most helpful and effective when the novice takes the initiative to ask questions. This helped her know how or in what way she can support the new teacher and respond directly to her needs.

In addition to using novices' questions as a starting point for discussion, some mentors used observations as a way to maximize responsiveness. This activity made it possible to suggest ways to create an optimal learning environment or provide needed supplies at post-observation meetings that would be most tailored to the novice's needs. For example, Jane declared that for her, observation and meeting time go hand in hand. Through observation she

was able to get a clear vision of the novice's struggles. Then, during meetings she and her novice could discuss strategies to improve the observed lesson. In this way, she could truly help her novice with examples of how to address specific challenges she had observed. In another example of responsiveness, when Colleen brought specific paperwork to their meeting, Vicky was able to walk her step by step through the process of completing it. This kind of hands-on approach allowed the mentors to directly respond to their novices' specific needs.

The Loop beginning teachers indicated that they wanted mentors who were available throughout the day and school year. Weaver & Stanulis, (1996) affirmed that having mentors who are accessible to help when needed is important for new teachers who are starting their careers. They want to get the help they ask for when they need it, and not feel like they are burdening their mentors. The novices do not want to feel as if they only have a specific, designated thirty minutes a week to ask their mentor every question or concern they have. Specifically one novice stated she wanted a mentor who made mentoring feel like it "was all about me" rather than having a mentor who makes her feel like mentoring is just another assigned duty or who is just going through the motions.

The mentors at School Three tried to act on these desires. One way that Liz explained how she did this was by leaving her door open (literally and figuratively) for her novice to come in at any time. The potential to seek help was amplified by the fact that these teachers' classrooms were in close proximity. From the beginning of the year, she told her novice to feel free to come to her with any questions at any time. In addition, she sometimes simply walked into the novice's classroom to check in and see how things were going and offer support. She tried to make clear that she was doing so to be helpful rather than evaluative. This seemed to work because the novice never reported feeling she was being evaluated by her mentor. In this

way, the mentor was expressed that the novice could continue to ask her questions, outside their required 20 hours of meeting time and even beyond this school year.

The vice principal concurred with the novices when he stated that mentor teachers should be welcoming and flexible with their time and help. To facilitate this, Sally felt it important that mentors not be overwhelmed or involved in too many activities when they are assigned to a novice because new teachers do not want to be restricted to the allotted meeting time for asking questions. The novices confirmed that being able to get help from their mentors whenever they needed directions, clarifications, elaborations, or further explanations of how to do or understand something was important to them. Additionally, the novices valued having their mentors available when they needed to vent, get advice, or have a confidant, even outside of school hours. Therefore mentors who made themselves available inside and outside of school were viewed as really caring about the novice's success. All the dyads during the study year interacted with their assigned novices outside of formal, face-to-face mentoring meetings by texting, emailing, writing notes, or stopping by their classrooms for an unscheduled visit. By mentors making themselves available in this way, the novices could see that they were truly committed to them and not just putting in the required 20 hours. During after-school social events the mentors and novices interacted freely about their personal lives and talked in a nonthreatening, laid back atmosphere, which also helped their relationships grow. When mentors go beyond the 20 required meeting hours to make themselves available, novices benefit and their relationship is strengthened.

Pedagogical Knowledge

In addition to building a positive relationship, being familiar with the novice's grade level content and curriculum and having relevant pedagogical content knowledge played a large

role in the support each mentor could give. For example, fluency, guided reading, comprehension, and differentiating instruction were all frequent topics discussed during meetings. One novice, Sally, commented on how helpful it was that her mentor knew a lot about reading fluency and offered websites as resources to help students develop this skill.

The novices reported that being paired with mentors skilled in implementing current teaching methodologies helped them utilize those strategies in their classrooms. When mentors attend professional development they are up-to-date with curriculum and can share useful ideas with their novices. Veteran teachers who are not familiar with new curriculum and current trends are not going to be able to assist their novices effectively and these new teachers may be left to fend for themselves. Therefore, novices want mentors who they can ask questions of and get meaningful responses based on knowledge and experience. Knowing that they are receiving advice from a teacher who has implemented the suggested strategies was more valued than hearing it from someone who just read about the information. A mentor teacher who is skilled in teaching the content of the curriculum is essential in building the novices' craft. Sally's description of a good mentor made this clear because she focused on the importance of knowledge of the current curriculum. She said "[The mentor] definitely should be someone teaching, like experience-wise, but I feel [it should be] experience in newer methodologies, ... research shows that it's working now!" Sally stated that with all the policy changes occurring at the state level, a mentor who is knowledgeable about up-to-date ideas such as the teacher evaluation system and newly researched methods such as visualization is needed for new teachers. It makes her feel comfortable talking to the veteran teachers about these new concepts when she knows they have implemented and experienced them. An administrator similarly asserted that veteran teachers selected as mentors should have consistently satisfactory

evaluations and demonstrate outstanding abilities to teach the content as determined through classroom visitations.

Mutual Exchange of Ideas

At times administrators are unable to logistically match mentors using research-based principles. Grade level and building location cannot or are not always taken into account. During the study, in spite of how administrators matched the teachers, perhaps due to all the ways the mentors worked to build their relationships, participants in all three of the dyads reported that they were able to establish comfortable, trusting, and constructive relationships. Additionally members of each dyad reported that the learning was based on a mutual give and take relationship in which both teachers grew professionally. This demonstrated that mentors can gain new ideas from novices and at the same time help novices lessen their anxieties about teaching and help them grow and develop (Moss, 2010; Northwest Territory Teacher Induction, 2011), which made the learning in the mentoring relationship a two-way street.

One example of this occurred when Paula attended a professional development session offered by the district and then shared with her mentor what she learned in the training. The veteran teacher was appreciative that the novice shared ideas, and in return she filled in gaps that the training left out or that she had acquired from experience. This kind of two-way learning was not limited to dyads working in the same grade level. Both teachers in Dyad Three also viewed learning in a mentoring relationship as mutually beneficial. Vicky reported that she was able to learn from her novice regarding a new computer program and even borrowed supplies from her. Also, during meetings it was evident that both teachers asked each other questions and sought and respected each other's opinions. The two-way relationship allowed for feedback and growth for both the novice and mentor teacher. Furthermore, Colleen knew Vicky admired her behavior

chart, but when she saw a similar behavior chart hanging in her mentor's room, it confirmed the reciprocity of their relationship. In another example of a mentor using ideas she learned from her novice, after Jane observed Sally, she tried using a similar reading strategy she had seen in her class the next day. The two-way learning process is optimized when both teachers exchange ideas openly without fear or intimidation (Boreen et al., 2009). All mentors encouraged this knowledge sharing which heightened the benefits of the mentoring meetings.

Not only did the teachers value the two-way learning, but an administrator also stressed the importance of the mutual learning possible in a mentoring dyad. The principal said that both teachers need to give and take:

It's not the place that a mentor teacher [should be] coming off as though they know everything. It's really the ability to work together, to grow together, to learn and explore things, because there's not any of us that know everything.... So to facilitate those kind of experiences [instead of being authoritarian] are really crucial I think too.

When dyads build camaraderie they create a partnership in which ideas go back and forth with mutual and open sharing. The School Three principal values ongoing professional development and feels that collaboration is key to occupational growth. Therefore, it is not surprising she would want the mentors and novices to embrace the two-way learning dynamic.

Sharing pedagogical strategies and ideas can lead to a mutuality where both teachers are giving and taking from the mentoring relationship (Moss, 2010). Sharing took many forms, but all emphasized equality and mutuality. For example, Dyad One alternated rooms for every mentoring meeting; this was one way for both teachers to get ideas from each other, demonstrated a shared approach, and was less intimidating for the novice. Additionally, mentors shared supplies or loaned resources for extended periods of time. By inviting the novices to come into their classrooms to observe, mentors began to share ideas. The importance of sharing went both ways. Mentors appreciated when the sharing was reciprocated and acknowledged by

the novice teachers. When they offered suggestions, they wanted to know that their novices were receptive and using them. Mentors reported that they enjoyed when novices came to meetings and discussed the advice given to them at the previous meeting. They stated that not only did this make them feel valued but also increased the dialogue between them as they could reflect together. One mentor mentioned that it was discouraging when novices seemed to overlook her comments and feedback. The fact that the mentors and novices shared ideas indicated that they had formed a positive relationship.

Conclusion

The findings from this study, derived from novices' and mentors' perceptions, experiences, and feedback showed various supports and difficulties regarding implementation. Without the support of all staff members the new design would not have been implemented as faithfully as it was. However, the model as designed was not fully implemented. The reasons for this were mostly structural. The official matching of dyads was later in the year than expected as School Three was not notified by the administration building until October to start the process and did not follow research-based strategies as there are only a certain number of mentors in every elementary school. The principal had little control over these situations, and the School Three dyads needed to adapt accordingly. During the year of the study, the dyads overcame the logistical obstacles and did the best they could to maximize the opportunities they had. Another contextual issue that arose was the limitations I encountered as the facilitator. Because facilitator was only one of my multiple roles, I could not assume all the responsibilities that it should entail. It was challenging to also be the researcher, colleague to participants, and teacher at the same time that I was facilitator. While I was able to provide some assistance for certain tasks, I was unable to offer all the support that was needed for success. Additionally, not

only did I not have any authority to insist that the dyads follow the suggested plan, I had to tread lightly to avoid jeopardizing my collegial relationship with them.

In sum, the findings regarding the two components; observations and meetings, put in place during the year of the study lead to implications for practice based on their strengths and weaknesses. The new research-based mentoring program was implemented using two distinct strategies as ways to enhance the support, which novice teachers receive during their first year. Observations were completed, but not as many as proposed. The pre and post- observation meetings occurred and participants used the idea of selecting a focus and a discussion afterwards. But the Logs were not generally used and it is likely that discussions were not as substantive as they could have been. Observation and its components were found beneficial despite the adjustments and limitations along the way.

Through mentoring meetings, novices got support from their mentors but without training or monitoring this support may have failed to offer the new teachers all they could have. The Tracking Log and “Cheers and Fears” documents that I provided for the meetings were not used as much as I anticipated but still added to the experience, according to the participants. Overall, the documents provided some support for the dyads even if just to start a conversation. All dyads began the mentoring relationship by meeting once a week but for various reasons, the frequency of meetings slowed down and/or ceased before the end of the school year. Meetings appeared to be worthwhile as far as answering basic questions or addressing novice concerns although deep reflection on practice and intense dialogue was generally lacking.

Most theories of change are weak on capacity building--knowledge, resources, and motivation--and that is one of the reasons they fall short (Fullan, 2001). As I reflect on the findings from this study I find challenges regarding the knowledge, resources, and motivation

that impacted the mentoring program. Perhaps the participants were not given enough knowledge or resources in order to complete the components successfully. As the facilitator I needed to provide the participants with all the tools necessary. Although I did the best I could under the circumstances, I did not supply all necessities and perhaps impeded the teachers' motivation. Fullan (2007) stated, educational change is not a linear process but rather an enactment of each phase--initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. Feedback must be collected and analyzed at each phase, which can alter decisions and improve the change effort over time (Fullan, 2007). With that said, the Loop District can institutionalize the new mentoring components by utilizing the findings from this study. In chapter five, I address suggested implications for strengthening and sustaining the mentoring program based on the findings reported here.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications

New teachers yearn for guidance and direction as they begin what most generally plan to be a lifelong profession. They may be fortunate enough to receive pertinent advice based upon experience along the lines of “Do not sit in that teacher’s chair or park in that space!”; “Yes, it’s true teachers can and really will wear pajamas on pajama day!”; “Forget about the lesson plan format you learned as an undergrad. It is time to be realistic!” Hopefully novice teachers will be provided a mentor upon hire who will share this kind of information about their new work environment. Perhaps even more important, new teachers need guidance about classroom management, curriculum, and helping students engage and be successful; both kinds of information are critical to their successful entry into the field. If new teachers are not assigned a mentor, who can they turn to for advice on these details and the numerous questions that arise during the first year of teaching? A mentor is needed to guide them into this challenging career. However, some novices do not receive mentors and the range of mentoring they may have if they do is so diverse that two teachers in the same school may have very different first year experiences.

This discrepancy as well as my own mentoring experience served as inspirations for my study. It seems unfair that some teachers get mentors that buy them supplies and help them set up their classroom before the year starts while others pay their mentor a fee for just signing their name on a piece of paper without providing any mentoring. My perspective on the program was based in part on my own time as a novice in which I met weekly with my mentor, was provided advice, and had a veteran teacher I could trust and rely on when needed. On the other hand, my mentor was not in my grade level, did not have the same lunch as me, and went on maternity leave in April of that year. I used these circumstances as part of the framing of my study,

knowing that each novice receives unique and unpredictable mentoring services each year. Once I realized that I was not alone in my experiences regarding the mentoring program, I knew this study was important because it was a systematic attempt to implement and understand how research-based mentoring would be carried out at my school. I was curious to find what the outcome would be if systematic research-based guidelines were put in place in my school. Perhaps the mentoring in the district would be of consistently higher quality. This could result in all new teachers having a positive, worthwhile first year experience, thus increasing teacher retention. I sought to gain a better perception of the opportunities and challenges of implementing key mentoring components and as a way to hopefully help new teachers by piloting a research-based mentoring program in one elementary school in the district.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the findings and limitations regarding the study. Then I discuss related recommendations for practice in creating, implementing, and sustaining a mentoring program, as well as implications for future research, which can decrease limitations that arose in this study. I argue here that ongoing evaluation is important to institutionalizing change. Lastly, I conclude with a section, which describes the impact my study had on the Loop District.

Background to the Study

During their first year, new teachers often feel unprepared for the reality of teaching; they need supports to help them through the start of their career (Darling-Hammond, 2011). This statement should not be surprising, but rather expected considering that student teaching is often insufficient for providing all the knowledge and skills necessary to be a competent teacher (Ingersoll, 2012; Jandoli, 2013). New teachers need to enter the position with guidance (Sava, 2010), and receive support from their districts, schools, and most importantly mentors.

Researchers agree that novice teachers need help, although many schools still lack specific programs to support them.

By establishing a formal relationship between a novice and a veteran teacher, mentoring is an effective way to provide the support teachers need to help them become proficient and prepared to meet the demands of the teaching profession (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Washburn-Moses, 2010). Knowing the importance and benefits of a strong mentoring program, The New Jersey Department of Education requires all novice teachers to be matched, upon hire, with a mentor who has been “trained” to fulfill this role. The training is neither defined nor provided by the state, but instead offered at the discretion of the district. This is one reason why the execution of mentoring programs and guidelines that shape them differ considerably. These distinctions in implementation cause inconsistency resulting in experiences of varying quality for novices.

Prior to this study, in an effort to comply with the state requirement, the Loop School District instituted a mentoring program for novice teachers. Unfortunately, the program was unstructured and lacked clear procedures. The only requirement was for the mentor and novice to sign a document attesting to their completing 20 hours of meeting time. Furthermore, veteran teachers were assigned to novice teachers and paid for their duties but without proper monitoring, training, guidelines, or accountability therefore the quality of the mentoring experience fluctuated for all teachers throughout the district. For example, some novices had weekly scheduled meetings with their mentors while others were forced to actively seek and engage their mentors with differing levels of success. Additionally, mentor teachers received little to no feedback or information in relation to the degree in which they were helping the novice teachers to whom they were assigned; consequently, debate amongst teachers has been

ongoing as to whether the Loop School District was actually meeting the state requirement regarding mentoring or was just in compliance “on paper.” However, it seemed clear that the Loop District needed some structural changes to meet the intent of the state mandate and gain the benefits of mentoring. As a teacher leader in the district, I set out to implement a research-based mentoring program with new components in the Loop District in an effort to do so.

Research suggests that a systematic, research-based, clearly articulated mentoring program in the Loop School District could help attract and retain highly qualified professionals (Ravitch, 2010). In addition, a well-designed mentoring program could improve novices’ attitudes, instructional skills, and feelings of efficacy (Darling-Hammond, 2003). This study set out to design, implement, and study a research-based mentoring program. Concepts from Fullan’s (2007) educational change theory were used as a theoretical framework to guide the design as well as the research. I sought to understand what the issues were in implementing a research-based program; I wanted information about its strengths, limitations, and what ideas needed to be revised in order to sustain it. This research is significant because it provided information to guide improvement and recommendations for the Loop District’s mentoring program (Rossi et al., 2004). The following research questions guided this study: How do the mentors and novices perceive a new research based mentoring program? How do they use the program? What influences their implementation of the mentoring program?

Findings

Multiple findings emerged as a result of data analysis that related to the implementation of the mentoring program. Given that specific, well-defined elements were missing from the previous program, this study sought to initiate an observation component with critical reflection and incorporate more structure for dyad meetings for the study year. For this reason, how

teachers implemented and documented the observations and meetings were the focus of data collection and resulted in the development of findings.

Mentor/Novice Interactions

Mentors and novices interacted in two distinct ways during this study. Through observations and meetings the participants built relationships and began to gain the benefits of a research-based mentoring program. Although the amount of interaction was less than proposed and did not always engender the most substantive or reflective conversations, the information gathered lead to recommendations for practice. Possible reasons for the obstacles encountered will be discussed at the end of this section.

Observations. Research suggests numerous positive outcomes of a comprehensive observation component in a mentoring program. One major benefit of novices observing mentors is that it gives them the opportunity to view effective teaching strategies and learn helpful classroom management procedures (Shernoff et al., 2011), which are primary concerns for new teachers. Additionally, when mentors can witness the novices' teaching they are able to offer advice that is specifically targeted to areas of particular need (Wong, 2002). Based on current research and professional development trends, the observation component was implemented as part of the mentoring program to increase its effectiveness. Although the proposed plan was revised, as limitations were reported and adjusted as needed, participants reported many benefits of doing observations during the study year. Furthermore, feedback was offered by participants to capitalize on the strengths and limit weaknesses in future implementation.

Before this study there were no structures in place to enable observations. The data indicated that a facilitator made implementing the plan feasible by scheduling the observations

and providing coverage. Teachers noted that without the coverage offered during the study, observations would have been more infrequent. Even though the planned number of observations was not carried out, teachers uniformly commented on their value. Novices were grateful for the first-hand experience of watching a knowledgeable veteran teacher to gain ideas about practice. Additionally, mentors appreciated the chance to observe novices so that they could offer advice to enhance their teaching based on actual evidence. Also, the mentors were able to gain ideas from the novice teachers, which they adapted to fit their classrooms.

Meetings. In addition to doing observations, another way the mentors and novices implemented the mentoring program was by participating in meetings. One goal of this study was to provide more structure to mentoring meetings since past dyad experiences ranged greatly from novice to novice. An effective mentoring program provides mentors and novices with time to talk, collaborate, and explore content by communicating about practice (Stanulis & Ames, 2009). The dyads all started meeting once a week with a scheduled day and time, but this frequency was not sustained for the whole year. There were various reasons for the decline in meeting time in addition to the fact that novices need less direct and immediate support as the school year proceeds (Boreen et al., 2009).

Mentor characteristics. While implementing the new components, the kinds of support the mentors offered the novice, whether it was verbal or in the form of resources, shaped the novices' learning experiences. Although these mentors assumed several roles throughout the year, it is important to distinguish them as each shaped the interactions that occurred in the dyad. The veteran teachers each incorporated a variation of techniques to enhance the interactions between them and their novice teacher. The teachers provided affective and pedagogical support to their novices in various ways in order to capitalize on the benefits of mentoring. I also found

that by increasing the novice's comfort level and establishing trust from the beginning of the year, more two-way learning and growth occurred between teachers. The relationship between the mentor and novice contributed to the implementation of the components.

Obstacles. The lower than predicted number of observations and the decline in meetings seemed directly related to contextual factors. Reasons for less than expected interactions in dyads could have been lack of time, non-grade level matching, and my limited capacity to support the work due to my own responsibilities. Overall, providing some mentoring structures and support for these teachers increased the interaction and opportunities for learning but fell short of expectations primarily due to logistics.

In this study, mentors and novices found it hard to meet and the frequency of meetings quickly dwindled. Time constraints could have been due to completing items for the district, scheduling changes, teacher absences, or other unforeseen events. The participants in this study confirmed the importance of having classroom coverage in order for observations to occur but still did not meet the proposed goal. The principal of School Three was not able to allot time during the school day for mentors and novices to meet or observe each other. If these opportunities are to happen, they must be arranged by the dyads themselves making the chance of frequent occurrences rare or unlikely.

The findings from this study affirmed the importance of best practices mentoring matches. This study showed an example of an administrator who encountered obstacles to making the best possible matches. There may be various reasons why matches are not research-based. In the case of the principal at School Three, she did not have a mentor available for every novice's grade level. Other reasons that administrators may not match according to best practice may be unfamiliarity with the research. Researchers suggest that best practice is for districts to

abide by a rationale for matching mentors to novice teachers (Boreen et al., 2009).

Characteristics to consider when making dyad matches are years of experience, grade levels, class preparation and lunch schedules, and classroom locations (Barrera et al., 2010; Boreen et al., 2009; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The goal is to make matches in which the teachers have as much in common as possible in these areas, which increases the chances of collaboration and heightens the learning experience for the teachers.

Another obstacle to implementation regarding the limited interactions that took place could have been the multiple roles I had in this study. I was attempting to maintain my status as a colleague, non-influential researcher, and facilitator. As a self-appointed, informal leader, I had no authority to insure the successful implementation of a research-based mentoring program. My role as facilitator focused on supporting the implementation of procedures. As a facilitator, I proposed the components and documents they could use in an attempt to improve mentoring at School Three but lacked the capacity to provide the teachers with all the resources they would need to fully carry these tasks out. It turned out not having this probably contributed to a less than full implementation of the mentoring program as I had proposed it. Although my role as a classroom teacher impeded the process, without my help arranging and covering classes the observations most likely would not have occurred. As a researcher I gathered data regarding observations, meetings, and documents to gain information about their implementation.

Documents

All the documents I developed and distributed to support the mentoring process were either unused or under-utilized for the purpose I intended. The three researcher-generated documents were created to enhance the meetings and observations between the dyads as well as track state required hours. The mentor in Dyad One returned the completed Observation and

Reflection Log after she observed her novice and that novice handed in a completed Log after she observed her grade level colleague. Although only these two teachers handed in these documents, all participants made reference to using them in some way. Along the same lines, most teachers said they used them, none of the dyads returned the “Cheers and Fears” document or the Tracking Logs.

Although the use of the Observation and Reflection Log was minimal, participants reported that they encouraged verbal critical reflection after the lesson, which they found to be valuable. Just as reported by Boreen et al., (2009), the participants reported that setting time aside for pre-observation and post-observation meetings soon after the observed lesson increased the benefits of the observation process. Despite the lack of documentation and formal pre and post-conferences, the observations enhanced the two-way learning relationships. Although teachers met before and after observing and said this was worthwhile, they did not necessarily have the kinds of conversations hoped for based on examples from literature.

A Tracking Log was developed to record hours, days, and topics to increase accountability. This Log was developed after a mentor requested it because the District had not provided one to record the state mandate that all dyads complete 20 hours of contact time. All teachers were made aware of this fact although no logs were handed in to the district or me, but teachers reported that they were used.

The “Cheers and Fears” document was created to prompt the mentors to be responsive to the novices’ needs and concerns. This was developed and distributed to give the dyads a format to follow as a way to increase the value of mentoring meetings. Even though the mentors and novices claimed that they used the “Cheers and Fears” document to establish a useful routine for meetings, they also reported that they were somewhat unsatisfied with the content of the

meetings. It is not possible to know if the “Cheers and Fears” format was not as helpful as it could have been or if they really were not using the structure it provided despite claims otherwise.

Obstacles. In sum, it is unknown if these documents in particular were not viewed as helpful and therefore were neglected, or if any protocol would be viewed as too cumbersome to complete. Also, some teachers gave the impression that completing the documents felt like too much work which they did not have time for on top of the increased amount of paperwork required from the district. Perhaps the perceived benefit of a more thorough and guided discussion was not recognized, was not enough of an incentive to complete the documents, or the participants did not see how using them would benefit.

Limitations

This research study had limitations due to a variety of obstacles, many of which were unavoidable. First, my biases about the need to restructure the program were known to all participants and may have had an impact on the participation of the teachers. My multiple roles as teacher, facilitator, and researcher created limitations that may have affected data collection. By maintaining all three roles throughout the study it was impossible to give maximum attention to each. Trying to act as a peer and a researcher trying to avoid having an overly strong influence on implementation caused me to not push the dyads to complete the tasks that as a facilitator I would have liked to do. Also, I did not collect all the data I planned for the study because the plan depended on participant cooperation that did not occur, my reluctance to push them, and the passive role of the district administrators who did not require them to do so. Despite the limitations, the data I was able to collect pointed to specific implications for practice that have significance for the Loop District.

My own experiences were the reasons this study was implemented and they certainly created a bias. Eight years ago I entered School Three as a novice and underwent a distinctive mentoring situation. As stated earlier, I was provided a mentor who was a classroom teacher two levels above my grade and she left early that spring on maternity leave. Consequently that same year, another first grade teacher was mentored by a reading coach, a teacher who provided literacy support for teachers at School Three. This coach did not have a regular class therefore her schedule was flexible and allowed more time for meeting and other mentoring supports. Also, she was a former first grade teacher who was familiar with the student expectations and curriculum for our specific grade level. This mentor guided her novice with complete methodologies and ideas related to first grade and School Three. Her mentoring services lasted the full school year and the mentor did not take any compensation from the novice teacher for the support provided. Although I had a congenial relationship with my mentor, I could not help but be envious of this other novice who had direct mentoring support from a veteran first grade teacher with no regular classroom duties. My experience along with hearing stories about numerous mentors throughout the district who took a stipend from novices without assisting the new teachers in anyway led me to have biases about the program. Through my involvement and the observing of other mentor/novice relationships, I had strong opinions about the inadequacies of the Loop mentoring program. I assumed that changes needed to occur to increase the chances that new teachers would get the support they needed to develop successfully in their careers. But in doing so, I may have influenced the outcomes. Given that my colleagues probably wanted me to be successful and knew how I felt about mentoring, they may have been more supportive and more willing to do what I asked than under normal circumstances. This may have influenced the implementation and therefore the conclusions that could be drawn; however, even under these

potentially favorable conditions, the participants did not fully implement the program, suggesting that there was much to be learned from studying it. Although it may have had impact on the implementation, all participants were made aware of my opinion regarding the Loop mentoring, as it was a reason for the study.

The multiple roles I played in this study may have added to the limitations. My role at the school as a classroom teacher was both a benefit and a limitation. As the facilitator I may have wanted to urge them to complete the tasks but as a peer I needed to maintain a good rapport with my colleagues. Also, being a classroom teacher kept me busy with my own teaching responsibilities and I could not fully commit my time to the role of the facilitator. Furthermore, as a researcher, I wanted an authentic picture about what would realistically happen without the teachers being pushed. These various roles I played in the study caused me to have some conflicting goals and perhaps to communicate mixed signals to the mentors and novices. I think teachers wanted to help me to a certain extent but without pressure or specific expectations communicated from the district or myself it was easy for them not to complete all the components. Whatever they did, they did either as a favor to me or because they wanted to, but not because they had to.

I was limited in the data I could collect by the willingness and ability of the novices and mentors to complete the requested tasks. Additionally, I could not select my participants based on them having a high level of willingness to participate. The mentors and novices participated because they were the teachers that were involved in the School Three mentoring program during the study year. Perhaps other teachers would have been more motivated to complete the tasks. Perhaps if I did not have a previous relationship with these teachers, then maybe they would have felt more pressure to complete the tasks. On the other hand, perhaps they would have done

less. Really, it is hard to know the extent to which my prior relationships with the teachers influenced their task completion, but it seems likely it had some impact one way or the other. The principal and vice principal were supportive of my researcher and facilitator roles and agreed to be interviewed for the study, but otherwise stayed completely out of it. They did not require teachers to hand in any of the study documents or even the completion of state required hours. All of these obstacles led to fewer documents completed and less data generated; however, even with these limitations clear findings emerged leading to pertinent and useful recommendations for practice at the school and district levels.

Implications

After analyzing the data and developing findings, specific implications for practice emerged that the Loop District could implement to strengthen and sustain the mentoring program. In order to increase the benefits of mentoring during their first year of employment, the Loop District should consider recommendations from this study based on the findings and in conjuncture with research-based best practice examples. Because “Change is a process, not an event” (Fullan, 2007, p. 68), while continuing to implement the mentoring program design I initiated during the study year, the Loop District can improve it. The district should address key problems that surfaced and establish conditions that enable the program to move from the initiation to institutionalization stage. The implications to improve the success of a mentoring program can be described as falling into two broad areas: leadership and professional development.

Leadership

Matching. This study demonstrated that dyads can be more successful when they are matched appropriately. First, grade levels must be taken into consideration; novices should be

matched with mentors assigned to the same grade level as them, or, as second best, a contiguous grade level. Being from the same grade level means these teachers are working on the same curriculum with the same student makeup, which makes the potential for mentoring completely targeted. In addition, when teachers are matched in the same grade level it is more likely that their schedules will coincide which aids in carrying out mentoring components that require times to meet. As illustrated in the Loop district, most grade levels have allotted common planning times, similar lunch schedules, and related prep periods, which increased occasions for collaboration. Another critical factor that should be considered when matching mentors and novices is their classroom location. During this study, it was obvious that the closer these teachers' classrooms were to each other the better the opportunities for interactions.

The principal at School Three was unable to make the most appropriate matches because she did not have mentors that met these criteria for the novices in the school. One way to address this would be to recruit and train mentors as needed based on new hires. The principal may need to actively recruit teachers to become mentors rather than depending on volunteers. Also the district may need to incentivize these mentors above and beyond the stipend they get from the novices in order to make the best matches. More frequent mentor trainings may need to be offered by the district in order to enlist and properly prepare teachers who have been enlisted to become mentors. As mentors transfer to new schools or retire, replacements for them need to be found. As other teachers develop in the profession they should be encouraged to become mentors. Increasing the number of mentors at each school will improve the chances that each novice will be matched with a mentor in their grade level upon hire. Principals should ensure that teachers in the same grade level are all working in close proximity. That way if novices are matched with teachers in the same grade level, they are sure to be close by each other.

Time. In order to support an effective dyad from which both teachers can benefit, they need time to meet. Finding time is a common challenge, however (Boreen et al., 2009). Throughout the course of this study, teachers were constantly stating that a lack of time was impeding their ability to get all the mentoring program components done including scheduled meetings and observations, and completing documentation.

Therefore, if the administrators can provide time by giving both members of a dyad at least one common prep period a week, it would increase the opportunities for interaction. Administrators can attempt to match mentors with novices with common preps and lunches or provide coverage to create time for them to meet by utilizing other staff members. Alternatively, Boreen et al., (2009) state that some districts have had success with hiring substitutes to cover for mentoring purposes. Having designated time to meet with each other during the school day would help maximize the potential benefits of mentoring. The dyads could use this time for regular ongoing mentoring meetings as well as for pre and post-observation conferences. Having enough time to plan for and then reflect after the observation is important because novices need time to ask questions about the ways mentors implemented the lesson or receive further explanations about the teaching that occurred (Roberson & Roberson, 2009).

Facilitator. Having some type of a facilitator was deemed by all participants as critical to the implementation of the mentoring components. Recommendations about facilitation arose in three distinct areas; arranging and providing coverage for observations, monitoring program implementation and holding teachers accountable for meeting expectations, and monitoring the implementation.

A facilitator can increase the amount of observations that take place by arranging and providing classroom coverage for dyad observations. Even with the facilitation provided during

the study, the number of observations was low and minimal documentation was completed. However, my role as a classroom teacher and informal leader limited my potential to support ongoing, regularly scheduled observations. Similar to what I did during the study, the facilitator could help the novice to identify a focus of observation, coordinate it with the mentor, and arrange for coverage. Ideally coverage for both teachers would be arranged for them not only for the observation, but also for a pre and post-observation conference. The benefits of observation are too great to allow lack of planning and time to hinder the experience if increased support from a facilitator can increase the likelihood of it occurring.

The facilitator could also take responsibility for monitoring the mentoring in two distinct ways, both being equally important. The first would be to establish clear expectations and hold mentors and novices accountable for implementing the mentoring program as designed. Until now, no one had done this. Even during the study year, when I was facilitating, I did not have the authority to do this. The participants were not accountable for completing any documentation. Considering that 20 hours of meeting time are required by the state, it is important that someone take responsibility for monitoring that they are indeed doing this. A mentoring facilitator could collect the Tracking Log monthly to view how often the teachers are meeting and what topics they are discussing. A mentoring facilitator appointed by the Superintendent or building principal would be viewed as more of an authority figure than I was which would be likely to support fuller implementation of the program by increasing participant accountability. The facilitator could also be checking the Observation and Reflection Log to gain information about its use. The “Cheers and Fears” may include personal information so the facilitator should be cautious regarding the collection of that document, although its use and effectiveness as well as meeting frequency should be monitored. The district should be aware of

who is participating fully in the mentoring program and which novices may not be receiving the high quality services. A facilitator can hold all parties accountable while offering them assistance when needed.

Another form of monitoring that emerged as important is evaluating implementation. A facilitator would be available to deal with any setbacks encountered along the way. Throughout this study I took on this role and, by conducting one-legged interviews, I gained feedback from the participants quickly and informally which enabled me to make adjustments to the program design as needed (Hall & Hord, 2006), for example altering the original Observation and Reflection Log. Assessing teachers' concerns and needs through ongoing evaluation of the process would be essential in sustaining any of these changes in a mentoring program (Fullan, 2007; Spiro, 2011; Queeny, 1995). The District should examine the process of mentoring and modify it to fit goals based on their needs and resources (Barrera et al., 2009); a facilitator could take on this responsibility.

In order to obtain the benefits of a mentoring program, the district should utilize a formally appointed facilitator to schedule and provide coverage for mentoring components as well as monitor the accountability and the process. In this way, the facilitator can provide appropriate pressure and support to guide the change process (Fullan, 2001). Additionally, a facilitator could take the lead in providing ongoing professional development for mentors and novices on how to most effectively use mentoring to support new teacher development.

Professional Development

Although the dyads followed through, to some extent, procedurally on implementing the mentoring program, the substance of their work together appeared to be somewhat limited. The mentors served the important role of answering questions, providing resources, and sharing

insights, but it did not appear that they were able to help novices reflect deeply on their practice as a way to develop as practitioners. It seems likely that the mentors needed more training to enact a research-based mentoring program. In many ways, the logistics were in place, but not the substance of teacher development. In fact, putting some structures in place seemed to have made a positive difference in the Loop district; however, more could be accomplished if there had been ongoing support and learning offered to teachers through professional development. Most of the guidance the mentors offered for novices centered on curriculum and classroom management but did not focus on teaching and learning. The participants were happy to have those supports but the mentors got little assistance and did not know how to use the opportunity to enhance professional growth. The district should consider providing professional development opportunities highlighting key ideas that emerged from this study's findings to gain the potential benefits of a comprehensive mentoring program. Professional development should be provided in the following areas; observing, reflecting, using meeting protocols, and developing the mentor characteristics that support teacher growth and development.

Observation and reflection. Observation, by both mentor and novice is known to be an important part of an effective mentoring program and reflection afterwards can strengthen the learning experience and improve practice (Stanulis and Ames, 2009). Novices and mentors can both learn much from observing each other and being observed when using a critical reflection piece. Although the Log was designed to support this process, it was not well used. Therefore it is not possible to know if it could serve this purpose. Not using it could be due to resistance to writing things down, an organizational problem, or opposition to something perceived as just more work; however, effective professional development that focuses on observation, reflection, and the benefits of documentation could have made the benefits of using it clear. Training can

help teachers understand how to use the Log in ways that enhance the process countering the feeling they may have had without training that it is just another form to fill out. Knowing how to conduct meaningful, helpful observations that go beyond just the how to is not an inherent skill, but rather mentors and novices need to develop these skills. Developing the skills and dispositions for observing and reflecting may be necessary to fully appreciate the benefits of documentation that the Log was designed to encourage.

Before an observation can take place a focus needs to be established and plans need to be made. A pre-observation conference, regardless of whether a form is used, should establish a specific focus or content area to be observed. Although the dyads were able to accomplish this, their focus was often very general. Professional development could help teachers learn how to identify more specific challenges or problems, which could make observation more beneficial. The goal of the pre-observation conference training should instruct mentors and novices about how to deepen their thinking about teaching and learning. In this way, dyads can establish a focus that goes beyond learning routines for implementing curriculum.

After a pre-observation conference the actual observation should occur. Teachers need to be skilled in observation as well as in recording notes during the observation. The teachers at School Three had no training in these areas but were expected to complete the task successfully. Obviously, they did observe and take in much helpful information, but honing observations skills should be a component of the professional development provided to deepen teachers' abilities to take notice of details and understand how the focus determined during the pre-observation conference should shape their looking. Additionally, teachers could benefit from further developing their ability to transfer what they see to notes that truly enhance their capacity to subsequently reflect on what occurred during the observation. Gaining these skills and

understanding could encourage teachers to use the provided Log or develop some other system for documentation that would contribute directly to a meaningful reflective process during the post-observation conference. Both novice and mentor teachers need professional development in how to use the classroom data collected during the observation (student work, teacher work, and assessment data) to help develop knowledge about teaching and learning. Mentors need specific skills in order to support the novice in building his or her craft and providing feedback to promote critical reflection after classroom observations (Stanulis & Ames, 2009). On the other hand, the mentor can model herself or himself as a learner seeking new ideas and feedback (Stanulis & Weaver, 1998).

It is not farfetched to surmise that the mentors in this study needed a support structure to promote reflectiveness and that is why the Log was not completed. Professional development provided by the district can help mentors develop the skills needed to use reflection more effectively as a tool during post-observation meetings. Mentors need training in developing the skills and implementing processes, which would presumably make the Log more useful and relevant. This is not to say the whole goal is to get them to use the forms, but rather using them might support the process. Specifically training needs to be provided to help mentors and novices develop their skills in analyzing data, giving and receiving feedback to function well as a “critical friend” in which both teachers push and encourage each other to learn but still keep things comfortable. The teachers need help to become better observers who can then use analysis and reflection to support learning.

The mentoring program in the district needs to support professional learning in the areas of observation, analysis, reflection, and feedback. By utilizing Observation and Reflection Log

to support the three stages of classroom observations the potential of conducting classroom observations will be enhanced.

Meetings. Similarly, the participants found the meeting structure helpful, but the process could be enriched with professional development. Dialogue is infrequently regarded as a tool for expanding classroom practice but can be very effective when implemented properly (Boreen et al., 2009). The “Cheers and Fears” protocol was selected to enhance and support this type of dialogue, but it was not well utilized. While it is possible that it was not a good choice, it seems more likely that mentors and novices did not see the benefit of using it; professional development may have helped here too. Specifically professional development should be provided which helps mentors and novices use their meetings to go beyond the straightforward question and answer sessions that seemed to be the norm to more complex topics related to teaching, learning, and students. Professional development should be provided to help the mentors learn the skills to promote this kind of discussion that the protocol was developed to produce.

Additionally, mentors could benefit from training on how to be responsive to the novices’ needs. Although the novices noted their mentors’ responsiveness, these skills can be further enhanced. A responsive mentor provides a novice with guidance in responding to immediate needs and concerns (Tauer, 1996), which can be prompted by utilizing the “Cheers and Fears” protocol, but only if novices and mentors have an explicit understanding that this is what it is for and how to best utilize it. The responsive approach was favored by the participants in this study, as well as in the one conducted by Tauer (1996). Professional development should help mentors and novices develop the skills and dispositions that would make the form or any similar document useful rather than just another chore that is easily ignored. Trainings should be

provided before the school year starts which models how to use the “Cheers and Fears” as a tool that can promote reflection and responsiveness. The document does not always have to be completed for the process to be worthwhile because discussions about practice can help mentors take a responsive stance, but some format that helps the dyad engage in this process will likely support this possibility.

Overall, distributing the forms or protocols to the teachers without helping them develop substantive understanding of the how to engage in the tasks they were designed to support made completing them feel like busy work, which implies that in the future the mentoring program should acknowledge the support needed for professional development.

Mentor characteristics. The previous recommendations were made to address obstacles encountered in implementing the mentoring program; however, the following recommendation related to strengthening mentors' interpersonal skills is made not to address a problem that occurred, but rather to ensure that this aspect of implementation in the future is as strong as it was during the study year. Mentor characteristics were very important elements of the program and professional development should be used to support and enhance the interpersonal skills they demonstrated. Prior research and data from this study indicated specific ways of interacting contributes to successful mentoring. Although the mentors at School Three all showed good basic instincts in how they built relationships with their novices, the districts should provide professional development for mentors to help them purposefully choose strategies that help build productive relationships with novices. The mentors were able to offer affective support, which increased the novices' comfort level and helped build a trusting relationship, both of which the novices appreciated. Offering professional development for mentors on ways to build that kind of relationship, understand the importance of being open about their first years of teaching, be

willing to show their vulnerabilities, and model their constant reflection on learning can increase the strength of the relationship (Boreen et al., 2009). As demonstrated in this study and supported by research, novices concur that mentors' self-disclosure about how they overcome problems and weaknesses was respected and welcomed.

Another area of relevant professional development for mentors could focus on effective ways to share their pedagogical knowledge. This study and previous research suggest the importance of a mentor who is knowledgeable about content, curriculum, and up-to-date teaching trends so as to offer the novice worthy advice (Boreen et al., 2009). A mentor can impact the mentoring relationship based on his or her knowledge and approach towards teaching. Specifically, the mentor's knowledge about the novice's grade level content and curriculum played a large role in the support they offered. As noted earlier, the grade level compatibility is important but not always feasible. Therefore, mentors should be skilled in translating their pedagogical knowledge to meet the needs of their novice teacher. In particular, when it is not possible to match mentors and novices in the same grade level, professional development should be provided to help them apply and adapt their pedagogical knowledge to whatever grade level their assigned novices are teaching in.

Ongoing. In sum, professional development can play a key role in enhancing the potential of a mentoring program and a facilitator is ideally situated to provide this kind of ongoing support. Specifically, the mentors and novices need ongoing opportunities to learn, reflect, get coaching, share challenges, and problem solve. In order to sustain the observation and reflection component of a mentoring program all teachers need to develop these skills. They will be beneficial not just for during their mentoring journey but in subsequent years as well. Schools that wish for a strong school culture that supports ongoing collaboration, learning, and

reflection should help all staff members develop these skills. Therefore, the benefits of professional development for mentoring would have a significant return on investment not just in the development and retention of new teachers but in promoting a learning community in the school. A mentoring facilitator could support the kind of ongoing collaborative and data driven professional development that it would take to truly institutionalize a school culture that could support a sustained and successful mentoring program at the Loop.

Future Research

This study not only raised implications for practice, but also suggested further areas for other research regarding mentoring in the Loop District and other districts using a similar mentoring program. Further research can help eliminate various limitations that arose in this study and perhaps strengthen the mentoring program in the Loop District and even more so, at School Three. Also, ongoing evaluation research is an integral part of sustaining change. Therefore ongoing monitoring of all mentoring components should be sustained over time through research efforts. Additionally, the district should stay current on and integrate findings from research on mentoring as it emerges in the spirit of constant improvement and better results.

If the district implements the recommended improvements to the mentoring program, it should study them to see what opportunities and challenges occur as a result. If the district can make optimal mentoring selection and dyad matches, then novices and mentors will not have to utilize their already stretched time overcoming barriers identified in this study when working in different grade levels. In addition to applying a research-based match, districts should consider utilizing professional development to train mentors. This was a missing design element in this study and could have been a mitigating factor for the lack of documentation use and limited interactions. This professional development should be created and based on new research and

findings from this study so they are effective. Given that a major limitation to this study was my role, a suggestion for the future would be to have a separate facilitator and researcher who is not a classroom teacher. An outside researcher with limited biases and no prior relationships in the district may decrease the chance of error. This facilitator should be able to hold mentors and novices accountable for the required tasks. Perhaps placing some pressure on the teachers will increase the amount of documentation that gets completed. Constant monitoring of tasks and feedback from participants will be necessary. However, follow up research would need to be completed to determine the impact of these improvements. Also, similar studies could be done in other districts as a way to understand the transferability of the design.

The results from this study were based primarily on the six participants opinions, which is a small sample size. The findings were unique to this study therefore the extent to which they can be generalized to other districts/states is unknown but worth studying. Being in an urban district did not impact the mentoring in my opinion, although I am not familiar with rural districts. This study was initiated in only one elementary school therefore it would be interesting to find if other elementary, or middle and high school teachers would find the same results. For example, would observation be valued on the same scale in upper grades? Would observation be a complete picture of what the novice encounters in each class like it does with the primary grades considering the dynamic of upper grades where students and classes change frequently? All these scenarios lend itself to the fact that this study opens the doors for future research being done using the findings from this study.

Impact

The Loop District made two specific changes to its new teacher induction procedures based on this study and a related one conducted by a colleague in the high school (Tartivita,

2014). These were altering the new teacher orientation held every year in August and instituting monthly professional development meetings for mentors and novices. While I focused on implementing research-based mentoring elements at an elementary school, a colleague conducted a study of a new induction process at the high school. She created a new teacher manual as a direct outcome from her dissertation work and included the Tracking Log and “Cheers and Fears” protocol, which I developed for this study. The former document could promote improved accountability, and the latter could contribute to meaningful dialogue during mentoring meetings by providing a systematic procedure for addressing novice needs.

Additionally, some ideas from the observation component found in my study were recommended to the assistant superintendent. Although she stated positive comments about the forms and observation in general they were not submitted into the manual. However, my colleague and I were encouraged by her to discuss observation during our professional development meetings and pass out the Log information. Our joint focus has brought attention to the mentoring program in the district in general.

The expanded new teacher orientation, which my colleague and I designed and implemented was created to better help prepare novice teachers for the upcoming school year. Each new teacher was invited to voluntarily participate in this day with the hopes of kicking off the school year on the right note. Besides instructing them on the topics the district required of us, we were able to incorporate our findings on what new teachers need to know to be successful before the school year begins. We began with icebreakers to provide the teachers with fun activities to get to know each other better and ease them into their new careers. Contrary to past practice whereby presenters often shared outdated or impractical information, these new teachers were provided with information by peers who were knowledgeable about the most current

curricula, standards, and methodologies. One activity in which we had the teachers participate was based on the “Cheers and Fears” document. In order to be responsive to the new teachers’ needs and introduce the document, we had a bin where the teachers could “throw away their fears.” When the workshop began, index cards were distributed to the teachers and they were asked to record fears, questions, and uncertainties and then drop them in the box. During lunchtime we (the facilitators) reviewed the papers and did our best to address these fears, anonymously expressed by the new teachers, later in the day. Additionally, the new mentoring manual was given out to every teacher who attended with the hope of increasing its use and ensuring consistent information is disseminated throughout the district. Six months after the orientation occurred, a novice teacher expressed her gratitude for the orientation to me, stating that she knew things about technology and programming that veteran colleagues in her school were clueless about. Based on the feedback gathered thus far, this orientation meeting was beneficial and should be continued in future years. Although this new teacher orientation did not come directly as a result of my mentoring study it does relate to an improvement in induction for the district overall.

Thirdly, the Loop District started to provide mentor and novice teachers with professional development once a month. These monthly meetings allow the teachers to gain one hour of professional development time (they need 25 hours a year) and also meet the state’s mentoring requirement of 20 hours of mentoring, if both members of a dyad attend. These meetings provide a platform for teachers to share ideas and learn from one another. In order to create a relaxed environment, snacks are provided and no administrators are present. I facilitate the elementary school professional development meetings and serve as a means by which new and veteran teachers can ask questions in a non-threatening atmosphere. During the first meeting, a

needs assessment was distributed for each teacher to report his or her strengths and weaknesses (Queeny, 1995). Each month, a friendly reminder is sent to the teachers through email also asking them to make me aware of specific questions or concerns they may have. At the end of these sessions an evaluation survey is distributed for teachers to complete. Here, they record their thoughts about these sessions, which will serve as suggestions for future meetings. Although this is not the type of professional development suggested in my implications, it shows positive steps for the district regarding the induction of new teachers and mentoring dyad relationships.

Although the Loop district has made strides in improving its induction and mentoring program none of the features of the mentoring program I implemented were sustained at School Three, besides the mandatory collection of the Tracking Log. There could be multiple reasons why the program was not institutionalized, such as a change in staff. The school has withstood two new vice principals this year, both teachers from Dyad Two got transferred, and neither of the other veteran teachers are mentors this year. More importantly though, the lack of sustainability is probably directly related to the three primary factors listed in my implications section: the (lack of) leadership, professional development directly related to mentoring, and my stepping away from facilitating the project. In a way, the shift back to old ways demonstrates the importance of these elements in creating a mentoring program that can be sustained.

Conclusion

This study sought to implement a research-based mentoring program to increase the services and support that new teachers receive when they enter the district. Although it focused solely on the Loop teachers, as they were the participants who offered their perceptions, the findings can be used to guide the design and implementation of mentoring programs in other

contexts or for future research. The role of facilitator was found to be an integral part of this study and the fact that the well received program was not sustained once I stepped away demonstrates that formally designating an individual to fulfill that role is a critical recommendation for the success of future mentoring efforts. Observation along with a pre and post-observation conference were reported as being beneficial for all participants, although the original design and documentation was altered. Matching of dyads and mentoring characteristics impacted the way meetings were carried out. Overall, initiating change in a school, such as new research-based mentoring program, takes dedication from the participants and a leader who can provide support, commitment, and encouragement that can sustain improvements. Conducting research to understand what contributes to the success of a program can help developers and stakeholders make improvements by studying its use, what influences implementation, and how it is perceived by users. In the case of new teacher mentoring this study points the way to a successful program. By utilizing the recommendations in this study, the Loop District's commitment to induction and mentoring will continue to grow.

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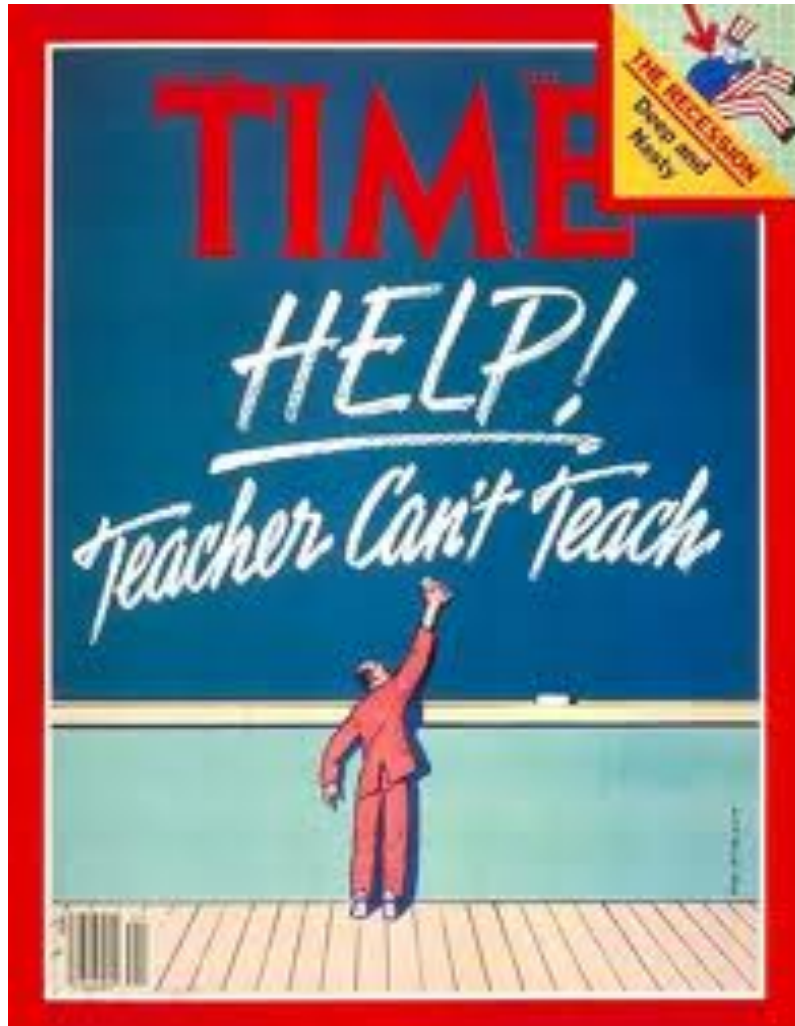
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Appendix A



Appendix B

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community such as a Critical Friends Group and facilitated by a skilled coach. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for new or experienced coaches, please visit the National School

Reform Faculty website at www.nsrffharmony.org.

National School Reform Faculty

Observation Protocol #5

Observer as Learner

Developed in the field by educators affiliated with NSRF.

The primary “learner” in this protocol is the observer. The observer’s only purpose is to learn how to improve his or her own practice. Since the observer has little responsibility to the observed, the duration of the observation and even the level of attention to what’s going on is determined by the observer, as long as this is fine with the person being observed. This protocol may significantly increase the frequency of visits to each other’s classrooms since observers may be able to do some quiet paperwork during their stay, and therefore are more likely to use a prep period to visit another teacher’s classroom. The time involved may also be reduced if neither party desires a pre-observation conference.

Pre-Observation Conference

It is not necessary to have a pre-conference unless either party would like to have one. A pre-conference would help to orient the observer as to what will be happening.

Observation

The observer focuses on whatever s/he wishes.

Debriefing

The observer often asks the observed questions that might help him or her better understand the choices made by the observed.

Note

Given the potential feeling of vulnerability on the part of the observed in any situation, and especially in a situation such as this where the observed may have little idea of what the observer is focusing on, it’s important that the observer try to ask questions during the debriefing in a way that does not put the observed on the defensive

Appendix C

Please use this document as a resource to guide your mentor/novice meetings.

Mentor:_____ ***Novice:***_____ ***Date:***_____



Cheers: (things that went well, areas improved, or any positive experiences to share)



Fears: (things making you nervous, concerns, areas you may perceive as weak)



Anything else you may want to share at this upcoming meeting:

Appendix D

**Mentor and
Novice Teachers:** _____

Observing effective teaching practice is a powerful tool to learn and grow professionally. Your Mentor or Novice will assist you with identifying a priority area of focus. This observation instrument will be used to gather information, ideas, and perspectives from selected role models.

Determine your Area of Focus

Review the Suggested Areas of Focus list (on page 3) as the focus of your observation. Consider current challenges or concerns.

Identify specific behaviors and strategies you wish to be observed:

Accomplished Practice Addressed: (Please check at least one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	1 Instructional Design/Lesson Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 Assessment
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 The Learning Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 Continuous Professional Improvement
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 Instructional Delivery and Facilitation	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 Professional Responsibilities/Ethics

Observation Information:

Teacher Observed: _____

Date of Observation: _____ Grade Level/Subject: _____

Observation Start Time: _____ Observation End Time: _____

Arrange your observation with the teacher at least one day prior to your visit.

Your visit should last a minimum of 20 minutes.

Debrief with your mentor about the observation within 3 days.

Record your observations

List the effective strategies you observed during the observation.

Identify the effective strategies that you would like to implement.

Record any questions that arose during your observation.

Debrief/plan with your mentor

Establish your plan for implementation/next steps.

Determine whether support is needed

Reflect on your plan

Think about your implementation of the strategies. Did you receive the desired results? What modification(s) may be necessary?

Suggested Areas for Focus Observation

Rituals and Routines	Learning Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifies expectations for class behavior • Transitions between activities • Monitors and stops misconduct • Applies rules consistently and fairly • Reinforces appropriate behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room arrangement conducive to learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Standards posted ○ Word wall ○ Class library • Visual aids enhance learning • Student-centered classroom
Teacher Behavior	Student Behavior
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interacts equally with all students • Maintains momentum • Uses effective praise • Circulates and assists students • Encourages active student participation • Keeps students on task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages in on-task work • Demonstrates appropriate behaviors • Uses time effectively • Works collaboratively with other students
Effective Instruction	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins with review/introduction • Communicates learning expectations • Stresses important points • Varies activities • Uses high/lower order questions • Uses appropriate wait time • Provides feedback, amplifies/clarifies • Provides opportunities for student application • Reteaches • Closes instruction appropriately 	

Appendix E



Mentor/Novice Meeting Log

Please use this to record your meetings and keep track of topics discussed.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i> <i>Begin/End</i>	<i>Topic</i> <i>Discussed</i>	<i>Mentor</i> <i>Signature</i>	<i>Novice</i> <i>Signature</i>

***"Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and
a push in the right direction." - John Crosby***

Appendix F**Updated Version of Observation and Reflection Log****Novice Teacher Observation Log****Observation Information:**

Teacher Observed: _____

Date of Observation: _____ Grade Level/Subject: _____

Observation Start Time: _____ Observation End Time: _____

To be completed before observation:

What do you wish to gain from the observation? Use page 2 as a guide for suggested areas.

To be completed after observation:

In what ways was this observation helpful? What did you gain?

Appendix G

Interview Questions for veteran teachers who mentored a novice teacher.

1. Please describe the mentoring experience you had this past school year?
2. What did you think about the new mentoring strategies you implemented this school year?
3. Tell me about the observation component included in this year mentoring program? Helpful? How did it work? What got in the way? Effectiveness? Implementation challenges and supports? Issues?
4. What is your opinion about the critical reflection component included in this year mentoring program?
5. Please describe what your meetings were like when you met with your novice teacher?
6. Overall what is the strongest component of the mentoring process to benefit novice teachers? Weakest?
7. Looking ahead for the next school year what changes do you think a mentoring program should possess?
8. What actions do you expect the novice to take in order to make the mentoring experience effective?

Interview Questions for novice teachers who were mentored by a veteran teacher.

1. Please describe a positive mentoring experience you had this past school year?
2. Please describe any changes to your teaching based on your mentoring experiences?
3. What characteristics do you think a mentoring program should possess?
4. Please describe your opinion about the observation component included in this year mentoring program?
5. Please describe your opinion about the critical reflection component included in this year mentoring program?
6. Please describe what your meetings were like when you met with your mentor teacher?
7. Overall what is the district's strongest component of the mentoring process to benefit novice teachers?
8. Please describe what you think the ideal mentor-novice relationship would look like?

Appendix H

Survey Questions for Mentor and Novice Teachers

As you know, I am completing my dissertation on the new teacher mentoring program that I piloted during the 2012-2013 school year. As one of my final steps in the process, I am asking you for help one more time. I need to get your assessment of the experience of mentoring or being mentored so that I can double check my analysis of the data I collected last year. I would truly appreciate your honest responses, even if they are negative or critical. This will be most helpful to me and most helpful to improving the mentoring program in our school. Thanks!

1. The Observation component was helpful

- a. very
- b. somewhat
- c. not at all

2. I would have liked more opportunities to observe

- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. not sure

3. I would have liked more opportunities to be observed

- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. no sure

If yes to either, what interfered with your ability to participate in observations as often as you would have liked?

4. Before a classroom observation took place, I participated in a planning meeting to select a focus of observation

- a. always
- b. sometimes
- c. never

5. Doing a pre-observation meeting to select a focus was helpful

- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. not sure
- e. did not take place

If you had a pre-observation meeting, what was helpful about the meeting?

If you did not participate in pre-observation meetings, why not?

6. After a classroom observation took place, I participated in a reflection meeting to discuss the observation

- a. always
- b. sometimes
- c. never

If you had a post-observation meeting, what was helpful about the meeting?

If you did not participate in post-observation meeting, why not?

7. My partner and I used the Observation and Reflection Log

- a. never
- b. sometimes
- c. every time

8. The Observation and Reflection Log was helpful

- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. not sure
- e. was not used

If yes, how and why was it helpful?

If you did not use the log (much), please give the top reason why not. If you used the Log, what did you like best about it?

9. The “Cheers and Fears” planning document helped during meetings

- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. not sure
- e. was not used

If yes, how and why was it helpful?

If you did not use the log (much), please give the top reason why not. If you used the Log, what did you like best about it?

10. The Tracking Log was useful/helpful for documenting the number of mentoring hours I participated in

- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. not sure
- e. was not used

11. The facilitator/ researcher was important in being able to implement the mentoring components (observations and meetings) during the 2012- 2013 school year.

- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. not sure

12. In the future I think a mentoring facilitator for the district would be an important role.

- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. not sure

13. I was matched well logistically (as far as grade level, schedules, and classroom location) with my mentor/ novice teacher

- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. not sure

14. The logistics (grade level, schedules, and classroom location) had a big impact on how often we met

- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. not sure

15. The logistics (grade level, schedules, and classroom location) had a big impact on what we talked about

- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. not sure

What is the most important quality in a mentor?

For example; building trust, having much knowledge regarding content and curriculum, using self-disclosure and sharing their vulnerabilities

What is the most important thing a novice should do to take full advantage of mentoring?

The best part about the mentoring program implemented during the 2012-2013 school year

was

because_____

What could be done to make the mentoring program implemented during the 2012-2013 school year work better?

Novice Only-

My mentor was able to establish trust with me

- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. not sure

My mentor was knowledgeable regarding content and curriculum

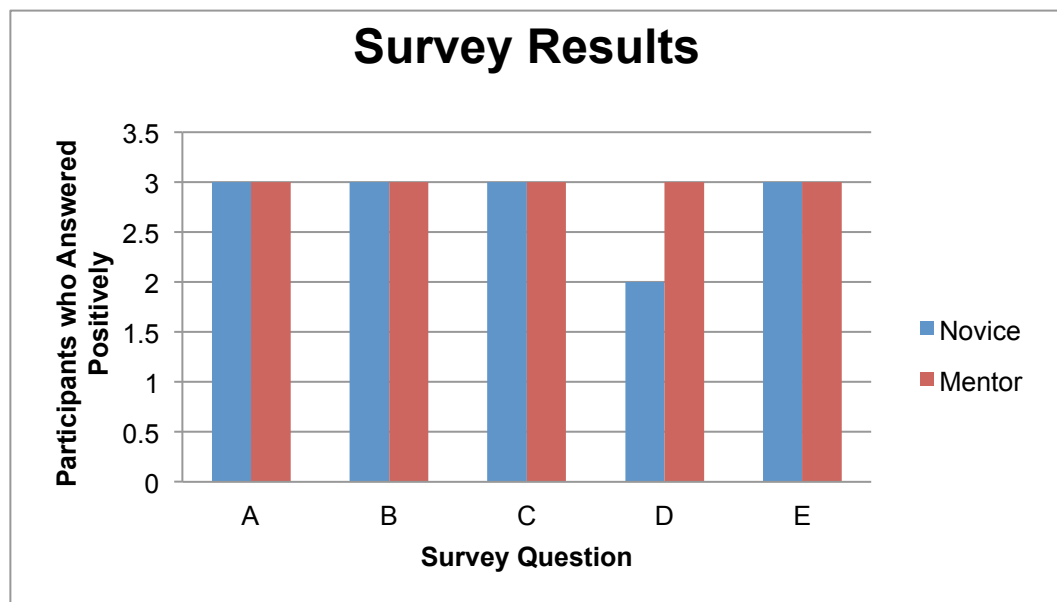
- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. not sure

My mentor was willing to share her own teaching challenges with me during mentoring meetings

- a. yes
- b. somewhat
- c. no
- d. not sure

Appendix I

- A. The observation component was very helpful
- B. I would have liked to have more opportunities to observe
- C. The Tracking Log was useful/helpful for documenting the number of mentoring hours I participated in.
- D. The facilitator/ researcher was important in being able to implement the mentoring components.
- E. In the future I think a mentoring facilitator for the district would be an important role.



Appendix J

Recommendations for the Loop District

As a result of studying a research-based mentoring program at School Three, the following recommendations are made to the Loop District to develop an ongoing mentoring program as part of a sustainable new teacher induction plan.

1. The recruitment of mentors should be ongoing and varied in order to meet the needs of new hires (various, schools, grade levels, and classroom locations should be considered).
2. Once selected, mentors need trainings to developing the mentor characteristics that support teacher growth and development. Also, professional development should be given to mentors and novices in the following areas; observing, reflecting, using meeting protocols.
3. Dyads should be matched according to research-based best practice.
4. Then an orientation should be provided for mentors and novices.
5. A description for the following roles should be clearly defined by the district; dyads, mentors, novices, facilitators, and administrators. The responsibilities for each will be outlined in the subsequent sections. It should be made clear what resources are available to support the mentoring process (e.g., classroom coverage for observations).
6. In order to sustain the required 20 hours all dyads should set schedules for frequency and duration of meetings by starting with once a week half hour meetings. Also the dyads should begin to plan for the observations to meet the proposed schedule. Both teachers should update the Tracking Log after each meeting.
7. Mentors should arrange and schedule when the observations will take place and alert the administrators. Mentors should make sure to meet with their novice teacher for at least 20 hours in one school year.

8. Novices should attend monthly professional development meetings. Novices should complete the “Cheers and Fears” protocol for at least the first six months of school. The novice teacher should observe her mentor in October and follow the proposed plan after that.
9. The facilitator should provide professional development (including an orientation before the school year) for mentors and novices, host monthly meetings to guide the experience, collect feedback on the process and modify accordingly, check the documents used throughout, and assist when needed.
10. The administrators should collect the Tracking Log at the end of the year to hold dyads accountable for meeting the state required 20 hours, offer mentors and novices time and coverage once a month to engage in observations along with coverage for a pre and post-observation conference to take place.
11. A potential observations schedule should be created. Novices should observe mentors in October. Mentors should observe novices in November. The dyads should alternate thereafter unless the novice thinks another colleague observation would be more beneficial (different content area, grade level, etc.).
12. All the documents used for mentoring should be available on an accessible online platform such as Google Docs. In this way all teachers, facilitators, and administrators will have access to them as needed.
13. The district should establish clear written expectations based on these recommendations, and hold mentors, novices, and administrators accountable for implementing the mentoring program as designed.