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Partnering For Success: The Principals' Role In Beginning Teacher-Mentor-Principal Relationships

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PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS: THE PRINCIPALS' ROLE IN BEGINNING
TEACHER-MENTOR-PRINCIPAL RELATIONSHIPS

by

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This dissertation, submitted by Rachael Agre in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done, and is hereby approved.
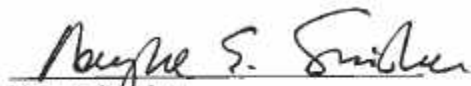
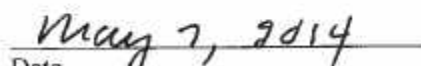Dr. Pauline Stonehouse

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This dissertation is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the Graduate School at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.

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PERMISSION

Title   Partnering for Success: The Principals' Role in Beginning
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                                                    Rachael Gayle Agre
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of both of you. I hope that when you look back on this time in our lives you will not remember my absence, but take with you the idea that hard work and persistence can result in the accomplishment of your dreams. To my husband Kyle, who stood by me in the excitement of the accomplishments and wiped my tears when I failed. Thank you and I love you.

ABSTRACT

This small-scale qualitative study examined the perceptions of elementary

principals, mentors and beginning teachers regarding the principal's role in promoting

beginning teacher professional growth within comprehensive induction programs. This

role may not be clear to principals, mentors, beginning teachers or induction program

leaders. In recent years, the call for principal instructional leadership is in the forefront of

the literature with increasing emphasis placed on academic standards and accountability.

This emphasis is shifting the focus of principal instructional leadership from teaching to

student learning. Mentors and principals are working together with beginning teachers to

accelerate professional growth and impact student achievement. This three-way

relationship creates a triad of educators invested in supporting beginning teachers and

accelerating their professional growth.

Qualitative study methods were used, including interviews, district, and state

program level document review. For the purposes of this study, participants included four

elementary triads working in different building sites within the same Midwestern district.

Five broad themes emerged from the analysis process: (a) healthy school cultures

and trusting relationships influenced beginning teacher professional growth; (b)

beginning teachers relied on their mentors to prepare them to be successful in the eyes of

their principals; (c) the mentoring and induction program structure influenced beginning

teacher's experience; (d) supervision and evaluation promoted beginning teacher growth

within the structured mentoring and induction program; and (e) all participants benefitted

from the mentoring experience when communication occurred within the triad. It is

essential for induction leaders at local, regional and national levels to recognize the

importance of individual principal's beliefs, dispositions, and actions in setting the tone

for the work of the mentoring and induction program at their school sites. The absence of

systematic and consistent principal interaction limits opportunities for consistent

feedback and the development of trusting relationships and professional growth for all

teachers.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Creating an environment, structure and expectations to begin closing the educational achievement gap must be a top priority of principals. Principals have a key role in the induction of beginning teachers (Johnson, 2004), setting the tone for the staff and especially beginning teachers. This support may include creating a master schedule aligned with the teacher induction schedule, thoughtfully selecting appropriate mentors, observing and providing direct feedback and teaching in the beginning teacher's classroom to allow them to observe other more experienced teachers. Many roles of the principal that assist in setting the professional culture and climate of a building have direct links to supporting an induction program (Sargent, 2003), yet typical induction programs relieve principals of immediate responsibility (Elliott, Isaacs, & Chugani, 2010). This study examined the type of principal support, the quality of support, and the perceived importance of that support for beginning teachers.

Darling-Hammond (2003) described the primary role of the principal as building the collective capacity of the school staff. In this manner, principals also serve as advocates for their beginning teachers in numerous ways. "We are finding that the principal can trump even in the most potent and well-designed, carefully implemented induction or mentoring effort" (Moir, 2009, p. 3). One might expect the induction literature regarding beginning teachers to provide guidance regarding the principal's role

in supporting teachers at the start of their careers. Hughes (1999) stated, "While this literature acknowledges the unique needs of beginning teachers, no special role is given to the principal in meeting these needs" (p. 184). Many policy reports and educational articles encourage principal support; however, the expectations defined do not promote active participation within mentoring and induction, but rather as advocates for and facilitators of the process.

In serving as an Assistant Superintendent, I find that many of the initiatives with which I work are often stalled or even stopped at the principal level, never reaching or impacting teachers or students. Historical and current research most often notes principals as being prohibited from being involved in the mentoring relationship, typically on the grounds of protecting confidentiality. Moir (2009) maintained that mentors must learn how to "communicate their work without breaching confidentiality," and principals need to "embrace mentors as their compatriots and co-leaders for learning" (p. 3). Principals play an important role in induction by fostering a climate in which the dialogue between beginning teacher and mentor can occur most productively (Bartell, 2005), setting the stage for mentor and beginning teacher success.

Statement of the Problem

The relationship between mentors and principals is key (Lieberman, Hanson, & Gless, 2012). However, the historical research and practices of mentoring and induction has left the principal out of the working relationship between mentors and beginning teachers. They are tasked with operational roles of pairing mentors and the signing of paperwork. This hands-off approach is leaving beginning teachers and mentors on their own, often confused as to what involvement the principal should or should not have. The

gap revealed in the historical research on mentoring and induction points to the need for reconsideration of the principal's role in induction programs.

Beginning teachers face many challenges in their first years of teaching; they must establish classroom management procedures, plan instruction, assess student learning, differentiate instruction, and learn school, district, and state policies (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). These challenges are often compounded by the heightened expectations and mounting pressures of increased responsibilities and wide range of student academic abilities, learning styles, and behaviors (Bartell, 2005; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Youngs, 2007), making it even more important that principals understand and support induction.

Researchers and policy makers have increasingly looked to induction programs to address concerns about beginning teacher development: a way to improve instructional practice, raise retention rates, and increase student achievement (Halford, 1998; Huling-Austin, 1992). Exploration into how beginning teachers' induction experiences are influenced by school-district policies, (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglman, 2004) the professional cultures in their schools (Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001) and the role their principals serve (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Brock & Grady, 2001; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Watkins, 2011) are current topics of research.

Research has shown that beginning teachers' growth and development is enhanced when they are given support that addresses their professional and personal concerns during their transition from student teacher to instructional leader in the classroom (Angelides & Mylordou, 2011; Bullough, 2012; Fullan, 2001; Langdon, 2011; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). However, research has also shown that beginning teacher

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induction may not necessarily meet the professional and personal needs of beginning

teachers (Gilles, Wilson, & Elias, 2010; Menon, 2012). Researchers (Andrews & Quinns,

2004; Fullan, 2001; Wong, 2004) attribute this struggle and subsequent failure to the

behaviors of the principal. The work of principals to support change, rather than act as

barriers to it, puts them in the most influential position "to shape the organizational

conditions necessary for success" (Fullan, 2001, p. 76).

There is a wealth of literature on the need to support beginning teachers in their

first years of teaching, and the effectiveness of induction programs in promoting retention

and professional growth (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Angelides & Mylordou,

2011; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). However, there has been little

research on how principals affect the experiences of beginning teachers. Among a long

list of principal duties and responsibilities is the role of instructional leadership. Wong

(2004) warned educational leaders about providing a beginning teacher with a mentor,

without any other support mechanisms in place. This decision removes the principal from

the leadership needed to support and retain and sustain beginning teachers. Considered by

many researchers and those in the field to be their most important responsibility,

principals have been called to be "head learners" tasked with "experiencing, displaying,

modeling, and celebrating" (Barth & Guest, 1990, p. 46) the work of teachers.

Despite the research demonstrating that principal's influence on beginning

teachers is significant, this literature does not clearly define the role of the principal in

meeting these needs (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004).

Instead, the research often points to the roles of mentors (Brock & Grady, 2001) as the

solution. While the principal literature is full of prescriptive views of best practice, much

less consideration has been given to the integration of the "what' with the "why" and the "how" of principals come to think and act as they do (Carver, 2002; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001) within the context of beginning teacher support, professional growth and evaluation. Ultimately, if induction programs aim to actively engage principals in beginning teacher support and professional growth, clear understandings regarding how principals can work alongside mentors must be articulated (Carver, 2003).

Although principals' responsibilities throughout time have been divided between managerial and instructional demands, it was not until the effective schools movement (Edmonds, 1979; Purkey & Smith, 1983) that instructional leadership attracted national attention and discussion. For decades the term instructional leader has been used in educational literature to describe the work of principals. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) described instructional leadership as more of a motto than a defined set of leadership practices. Instructional leadership is used interchangeably in the literature with terms such as distributed, shared, collaborative, and participative. The research on supporting beginning teachers of the 1980s acknowledges the need for induction programs but includes little focus on the importance of the role of the principal in this work. According to Deal and Chatman (1989), principals are seldom available to support beginning teachers "learn the ropes or perfect their skills" (p. 22). Many principals continue to expect beginning teachers to enter the profession ready to assume the full responsibilities of the classroom teacher (Chow, Wong, & Yeung, 2002; Kestner, 1994).

Learning to teach is a developmental process taking place over time, often over several years. However, few principals view beginning teachers as novices who need help

to master the art and science of teaching (Johnson & Kardos, 2003). Supervision is an essential part of a principal's role impacting teachers' professional growth and development (McKerrow, 1996). Traditionally, principals have been regarded mainly as teacher evaluators and are not sufficiently prepared to include teacher formative assessment into their work. Research has shown that when principals recognize the power of formative assessment to accelerate teacher professional growth, they begin to prioritize supporting this ongoing learning (Watkins, 2011). Supervision which includes providing both formative and summative feedback can support teachers' instructional practice and promote professional growth.

The processes for evaluating beginning teachers differ from those used to evaluate experienced teachers, because of the developmental level of the beginning teacher. As they gain experience and begin to understand the evaluation process, the procedures become increasingly more consistent with those used to evaluate experienced teachers (Nolan & Hoover, 2011). The first year of teaching is a roller-coaster ride for many beginning teachers (Moir, 2009). The level of performance during the first year is likely to improve with time, providing supervisory support structures are in place (Nolan & Hoover, 2011).

The early 2000s brought about higher levels of professional practice and accountability for teachers with the enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This resulted in a push to raise standards and high-stakes testing which led to increased public attention, professional challenges and pressure, making "teaching more complex and difficult than any other time in our nation's history" (Saphier, Freedman, & Aschheim, 2001, p. 18). The challenge of attracting and retaining quality teachers is heightened by

increased pressure for district and school accountability, often in the form of high-stakes testing and mandated curricular standards. As a result, beginning teachers are "struggling to learn their craft in dynamic and frequently chaotic environments" (Birkeland, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu, & Peske, 2001, p. 1)

Leithwood et al. (2004) found that beginning teachers are most influenced and motivated by the direct experiences they have with their building principal. However, literature of the past two decades defining the principal's role in helping beginning teachers reach higher levels of professional practice is scarce.

Researchers (Ferrandino, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2004; National Staff Development Council, 2000) suggest that leadership roles executed at all levels of the system will provide the biggest benefit to the overall system. The literature cautions that the role of the principal should not be overlooked in the induction process (Brock & Grady, 2001; Carver, 2002; Gimbert & Fultz, 2004). However, without a clear definition of principal leadership, the sharing of this work may easily become the simple distribution of management responsibilities.

In a rapidly changing age of standards-based reform and accountability, a different conception of leadership has emerged that focuses on what is essential, what needs to be done, and how to get it done. The goal of instructional leadership is defined as instructional supervision for teachers' professional growth and development (Gimbert & Fultz, 2004). This latest shift brings with it dramatic changes in what is needed and expected from principals. Principals are now called to be leaders of learning who can build a team capable of delivering effective instruction, a team that embraces and includes beginning teachers (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Beginning teachers identify the school principal as the most significant person in the induction process and rely on them for support and guidance. The principal is likely the person who hired them and is seen as their evaluator and supervisor. The many roles the principal plays might be confusing to beginning teachers who want to please and receive good evaluations (Brock & Grady, 2001). Research finds that principals are frequently absent in the direct support of beginning teachers and have taken a back seat with mentors at the helm. A sound research base is needed to guide principals in developing their roles in induction (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Brock & Grady, 2001; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to better understand the principal's role in supporting, developing and assessing beginning teachers within the parameters of a comprehensive mentoring and induction program, as perceived by beginning teachers, mentors and principals. Perceptions of participating principals, mentors and beginning teachers regarding the role of the principal in supporting beginning teacher induction were examined. As a result of this study, recommendations will be made to guide improvement of the induction programs to promote professional growth of beginning teachers by providing clarity of roles within the induction process for principals, mentors and beginning teachers at the local, state and national level.

Research Questions

This study grows out of a concern for how the role principals play impact teachers, beginning and experienced, more broadly. In other words, does the experience of working with beginning teachers and their mentors create learning opportunities for

principals that force the re-examination of their beliefs and expectations for all teachers? More specifically, this study has answered the following questions:

1. How do the backgrounds, beliefs and actions of elementary principals regarding leadership, induction, and teacher evaluation influence beginning teacher experiences within the context of a statewide induction program?

2. How do principals support, develop, and assess beginning teachers?

3. How do beginning teachers experience interactions with principals? How do these interactions appear to influence beginning teachers' professional growth?

4. How do mentors experience interactions with principals? How do these interactions appear to influence beginning teachers' professional growth?

Importance of the Study

The success of beginning teachers will decide the future success of an entire generation of students (Breaux & Wong, 2003). In the last decade, research on educational policy has focused attention on teacher quality and its effects on student achievement. Brock (1999) pointed out that "The success of beginning teachers is critical to student success, and the success of both is largely the responsibility of the principal" (p. 20). Recent public opinion polls reflect what parents have always known; teachers are the most important factor in whether or not children learn at high rates and achieve the standards (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Rice, 2003). What teachers know and can do in the classroom is the most important factor resulting in student achievement.

The period known as induction became a focus for research in the early 1980s in efforts to address the "revolving door of teacher attrition" (Achinstein & Athanases,

2006, p. 3). Retention of beginning teachers is a serious concern. It is estimated that 30-

50% of beginning teachers resign during their first three to five years of teaching

(Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Colley, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2003;

Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Nolan & Hoover, 2011). American schools spend more than

$2.6 billion annually replacing teachers who have dropped out of the profession. Many

analysts believe that the price is actually much larger when taking into account the

decrease in teacher quality and student achievement (Alliance for Excellent Education,

2004). Beginning teachers are particularly vulnerable due to difficult work assignments,

unclear expectations, inadequate resources, isolation, role conflict and reality shock, all

contributing to the high attrition rates. No longer under the direct supervision of a

cooperating teacher, many beginning teachers feel isolated and alone (Nolan & Hoover,

2011). Teaching has been labeled as "the profession that eats its young" (Halford, 1998,

p. 33) because many beginning teachers enter their first year of teaching expected to

perform the same duties and responsibilities as experienced teachers to the same level of

expertise, efficiency, and efficacy (Andrews & Quinn, 2004; Angelle, 2006; Anhorn,

2008; Bartell, 2005). Beginning teachers are often left trying to catch up from behind as

their principals and mentors "already possess the skills of teacher, trainer, coach,

assessor, and evaluator" (Elliott et al., 2010). Darling-Hammond (2003) cited salary,

teacher preparation, and mentoring support as reasons beginning teachers choose to stay

in or leave the profession.

Research demonstrates that effective induction cuts attrition rates in half by

providing nurturing cultures which support beginning teachers and help them grow

professionally (Gardner, 2003). In addition, comprehensive induction helps to develop

beginning teachers into high-quality professionals who improve student achievement (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). This is where principals must step in. By providing support as instructional leaders, culture builders, and mentor coordinators, they can create an environment where beginning teachers are able to thrive (Colley, 2002).

Considerable evidence (Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine, 1996; Koppich, 2004) indicates how critical teachers are to student learning and achievement. Now more than ever, developing and retaining highly qualified teachers continues to be a critical need (Berry, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999). In 2002, with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, pressure to close the student achievement gap was increased. At this same time, NCLB was enacted requiring students to make Adequate Yearly Progress toward state standards, as well as mandating a "highly qualified" teacher in every classroom. Currently, the rigorous Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are causing major education reforms to shift teaching and learning nationwide. During this time of rapid changes in not only what is taught, but how it is taught, the need for comprehensive beginning teacher induction is essential. The adoption of the CCSS will likely create "the potential for a significant gap between preparation programs and classroom practices" (Paliokas & Killion, 2013, p. 6) and may impact beginning teachers most strongly. The speed with which teacher preparation programs are able to embed the CCSS has implications for how much professional learning and support schools and districts will need to do during induction.

In reaction to teacher attrition rates, and accountability measures, beginning teacher induction programs, which utilize mentors, are being implemented across the country. The attention being given to raising the academic bar for students and

accountability for teachers validates the need for clarity and deeper understanding

regarding the principal's role in mentoring and induction. Induction programs can offer

support, and in so doing lower teacher attrition, promote beginning teacher growth, and

improve the chances that schools can close the educational achievement gap (Alliance for

Excellent Education, 2004; Angelides & Mylordou, 2011; Berry, 2004; Gilles et al.,

2010).

The importance of principals shifting emphasis from managers to instructional

leaders, requiring them to be more knowledgeable about instructional practice and the

realities classroom teachers face, is well documented in current literature (Allen, 2000;

Bloom, 2009; Brock & Grady, 2001; Heffner, 2009). Studies suggest that principals who

view themselves as instructional leaders are more likely to directly facilitate and address

instructional issues of beginning teachers alongside mentors (Carver, 2003; Heffner,

2009; Spillane et al., 2001; Youngs & King, 2002). However, this effort to provide

support to beginning teachers is being done so without guidance, clarity of roles or

communication (Brendle-Corum & Haynes, 2004; Brock & Grady, 1998; Carver, 2002;

Gimbert & Fultz, 2004). Dependent upon the route individual principals chose to earn

their administrative endorsements; they may or may not have the strong background in

instructional design or pedagogy necessary to provide this support to beginning teachers.

What is the role of the principal in supporting beginning teachers within an

induction program? Principals are in a position to address the need for additional

supervision and induction activities that encourage, support, and retain beginning

teachers (Elliott et al., 2010). Despite the commonly held belief amongst educators that

administrators are important in the mentoring of beginning teachers, there are relatively

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few studies that explore the causal or relational aspects of principal and beginning teacher interaction. Recent studies mention the importance of the principal-mentor-beginning teacher relationship as a triad upon which effective induction programs can be built, yet there is little guidance on or definition of the role of the principal (Scott, 2001; Watkins, 2011). Principals who were asked felt "frequent, personal communication" with their beginning teachers was the most effective strategy (Brock & Grady, 2001). Hughes (1999) reported principals understand their role in working with beginning teachers. Yet regardless of their beliefs and values about this role, they often do not reflect this work in their practice.

The many roles the principal plays might be confusing to beginning teachers who want to please and receive good evaluations (Brock & Grady, 2001). Research finds that principals are frequently absent in the direct support of beginning teachers and have taken a back seat with mentors at the helm. A sound research base is needed to guide principals in developing their roles in induction (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Brock & Grady, 2001; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). In shifting beginning teacher support from principals to mentors, over the past two decades, have we failed to identify the key role principals play in beginning teachers support (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Brock & Grady, 2001; Carver, 2002; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Watkins, 2011)? By uniquely highlighting perceptions of principals, mentors, and beginning teachers regarding the principal's role in the work of mentoring and induction, this study aims to identify the actions, beliefs, and dispositions which positively impact the acceleration of beginning teacher growth.

What is Mentoring and Induction?

Teaching can be a demanding and complicated profession, and the transition into the classroom from college preparatory programs can be very difficult. A teacher induction program can help beginning teachers improve practice, learn professional responsibilities and ultimately positively affect student learning. Teacher induction is the systematic structure of support for beginning teachers and typically includes an opportunity to develop an understanding of the local school, the community, and the culture. It offers beginning teachers access to the accumulated instructional knowledge and expertise of their colleagues in ways that contribute to student success.

Mentoring is a common element of induction programs designed to assist beginning teachers in the ongoing process of learning to teach. Mentoring beginning teachers can help them improve and strengthen their skills and practices. Mentors are typically experienced teachers who are assigned to beginning teachers as a means of support and guidance throughout their first year of teaching. They meet one-on-one to offer counsel and provide information in a timely fashion to their mentees. Mentors observe and provide feedback regarding classroom management and instruction, provide access to resources, model good teaching practices, and serve as confidants and advocates in a variety of formalized and less formal contexts to mentees**.**

Many induction programs deliberately differentiate between the roles and responsibilities of mentors and instructional coaches. The table (see Figure 1) below depicts the distinctions:

Mentor	Instructional Coach
Provides support and assistance to beginning teachers	Offers guidance and support to beginning teachers as well as experienced
Assigned to beginning teachers	Selected and sought out by teacher
Focuses on topics defined by the induction program and/or what the beginning teacher requests	Focus of coaching is chosen by teacher
Provides support for a defined period of time	Relationship has no pre-determined timeframe
Focuses on all aspects of induction	Focuses on specific needs determined by the teacher

Figure 1. Distinction between Mentor and Instructional Coach.

The participating district has chosen to blend the roles of mentor and instructional coach by utilizing the student performance coaches, who are site-based instructional coaches. These coaches are also trained as mentors to work with beginning teachers at their sites. This is a unique context of deliberately blending the two roles which is a distinctive variable of this qualitative study.

Conceptual Framework

This research argues in favor of a broader system-wide approach to induction, one that includes the principal working alongside mentors and beginning teachers. Current scholarship describes the role of the principal in beginning teacher induction as providing strong support for mentoring programs or helping beginning teachers develop a sense of belonging in the school culture (Brock & Grady, 2001). Some induction programs suggest that mentors and principals meet regularly to discuss upcoming mentoring activities, learn about school initiatives, and align and integrate their work with beginning teachers (Davis & Grossman, 2012). Others encourage principals to "better understand how to use the resources of a mentor to provide high-quality support for new teachers" (p. 57).

Researchers have called for studies of induction programs that focus on both practical and conceptual issues related to how induction is done and what induction could be (Britton, Paine, Pimm, & Raizen, 2003; Stanulis & Ames, 2009). The conceptualizations of what principals should know and be able to do, however, is not commonly agreed upon by those in the field. To best understand the practice and context of the principal-beginning teacher-mentor relationship, an examination through various stakeholder lenses reveals unique and compelling distinctions.
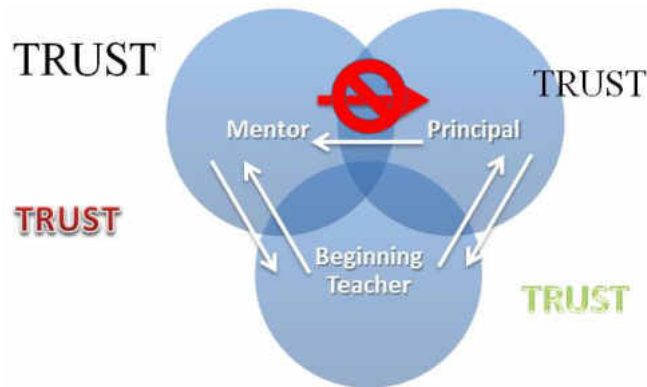
Figure 2. Triad Based on Trust and Confidentiality (Barkley & Bianco, 2011).

Note. From "*Instructional coaching with the end in mind: Using backward planning to improve student achievement*," by S.G. Barkley and T. Bianco, 2011. Copyright 2011 by Steven Barkley. Reprinted with permission.

Steven Barkley, educational author, shared the visual in Figure 2 as a foundational theory of supporting beginning teachers in their work to meet the challenges faced by educators today (Barkley & Bianco, 2011). This theory, depicting the flow of communication within the triad, has trusting relationships at the core of all relationships. Two-way communications occur between all parties except from mentor to principal. Barkley and Bianco (2011) deemed this as important, assuring the beginning teacher that

their mentor "is in their corner, not judging them or evaluating them." (p. 411). Mentors must communicate their work without breaking the confidentiality shared with their beginning teacher. The principal is the evaluator, often perceived by beginning teachers as the one making summative, high-stakes decisions regarding beginning teachers' futures. Carver and Feiman-Nemser (2008) found beginning teachers need to time to practice with feedback from their mentors, feeling confident that their struggles will not be shared with the 'evaluative' principal. Principals as effective supervisors can both evaluate and coach, but it is a delicate balance which too involves practice, trust and a clear plan to communicate these efforts.

In describing a similar partnership model, Ann Watkins (2011), Senior Director, Teacher Induction for the New Teacher Center, explained that principals effectively involved in induction programs develop triads built on support and confidentiality and "clearly define that everyone is working toward a common goal—successful teaching and learning" (p. 3). This three-way communication promotes professional "habits of mind" and can positively influence the school culture when induction program elements become standard practice for all teachers (Chako, 2009). The principal must balance the need to provide a nurturing and supportive environment within which the beginning teacher will take the risks necessary for professional growth, while at the same time provide the kind of intensive supervisory intervention to prevent bad habits from forming (Elliott et al., 2010; Watkins, 2005). According to Watkins (2005), principals can inform mentors about particular goals and needs of the school as well as communicate concerns and suggestions for support to mentors. In return, mentors can "explain their role, share sample formative assessment tools, and articulate expectations for beginning teachers" (p.

5). Ultimately, beginning teachers benefit from this alignment between the principal and mentor support.
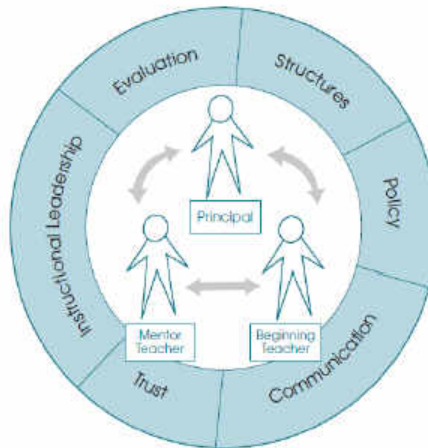
Figure 3. Triad with Contextual Conditions (Watkins, 2005).

Note. From "*Role of the principal in beginning teacher induction: A practice brief,*" by A. Watkins, 2011. Copyright 2011 by New Teacher Center. Reprinted with permission.

I am in strong agreement with the need for defining a consistent and coherent approach to teacher induction at every level of the system.

At the center of the beginning teacher's induction to the teaching profession is her/his relationship with a skilled, trained mentor teacher and a caring and conscientious principal. Working together, the effectiveness of this triad is key in accelerating the beginning teacher's development and ultimately student achievement. (Watkins, 2005, p. 2)

These two visual theories lay the groundwork for effective communication between mentors, beginning teachers and principals. I have come to believe the principal must not only be included in the ongoing work within the triad, but must first be an instructional leader who clearly defines and shares their vision and expectations for

beginning teachers and mentors. The individual principal's abilities to create and share a vision which includes providing explicit, well-defined support to beginning teachers, will allow experienced teachers to reflect upon practice and create a culture of coaching and feedback, ultimately resulting in improving the quality of education.

In my work as an educator, I have witnessed examples of this supportive work in various principals I have had the opportunity to observe, work for and alongside. This led me to question if this is sustainable across relationships and over time, as well as pondering whether particular principals are aware of and intentional in their decisions. "Every researcher has theoretical predispositions that affect the focus of a study (Merriam, 2002, p. 60). I have had the opportunity to serve the same district for the past 20 years. Within that timeframe, I have served in many roles at various levels of the system, beginning as a lunchroom supervisor to my most current role as Assistant Superintendent. In this timeframe, I worked with numerous principals. Prior to leaving the classroom for my first district-level position, I believed the principal's job did not have a direct impact on what happened on a day-to-day basis in the classroom. I have since witnessed first-hand both success and failure of ideas and initiatives where the unique variables between sites were the beliefs, actions and dispositions of the principal.

Our district is currently implementing an induction program which is organized at the district level, with the work taking place in classrooms throughout the system. I serve not only as a mentor but also as a member of the district's New Teacher Induction Program Leadership Team. In the three years this program has been in operation, I have witnessed first-hand the difference buy-in and involvement of the building principal can make on the induction program's impact. Merriam (2002) recognized that researchers are

often immersed in the discipline of their research and carry a "theoretical orientation" prior to the onset of the investigation (p. 54). Being immersed in the work of mentoring and induction and attempting to label when I see it being most successful often leads me to examine the work of the principal within the program.

In order to promote effective models of teacher support, we must understand the principal's role in this work. Boreen, Johnson, Miday, & Potts (2009) stated designing clearly articulated communication guidelines between mentors and building principals is "equally as important as determining their separate roles" (p. 133). Through the lens of beginning teacher support and professional growth, this study sought a deepened understanding of the collaborative relationship between the mentor, beginning teacher and the principal.

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study in one Midwestern suburban elementary school in the winter of 2012 to explore these broad research questions. This particular site is not included in the data of the current qualitative study and was utilized solely for purposes of the pilot. I decided to focus first and foremost on the principals, acknowledging that principals are one piece of the triad relationship. This decision was based on my past and current experiences with principals within mentoring and induction, as well as the fact that little attention has been dedicated to principals in the mentoring and induction literature.

Notable conditions of the pilot site which set the stage for this particular study were the existence of a comprehensive induction program, a principal in her first year at this site, and the additional role of student performance coaches who also worked as

mentors to provide support to beginning teachers. This pilot study was conducted in a large K-5 elementary building with a principal who was new to the staff and students. The beginning teachers, mentors and the principal in this study were in agreement on several beliefs: (a) the strength of the mentor program to build capacity in beginning teachers; (b) the positive culture within the building which was mainly credited to the work of the principal; and (c) confusion regarding the role of the principal within the induction program.

The participating mentors stated confusion in regards to the principal's involvement, and the beginning teachers acknowledged the principal did not have strong knowledge of their work or the issues being discussed with their mentors. Yet both mentors and beginning teachers stated that they did not expect more than this from their principal. They knew and acknowledged she was busy and working very hard. This principal was held in high regard by her staff, and the culture was one of trust and collaboration. The beginning teachers relied heavily upon their mentors and, as their immediate needs appeared to be met, did not report seeking additional support from their principal.

The principal participant in this study recognized the need for beginning teacher assistance and attempted to provide it. The gap revealed within the pilot study and in the historical research on mentoring and induction led me to believe this was a high achieving principal, aligning to the induction programs guidelines. Guidelines which were built upon current research that when traced over the last twenty years, have left the principal behind. To that end, reconsideration of the principal's role in induction programs must be reevaluated.

Scope of the Study

This qualitative study investigated the role of elementary principals in beginning teacher induction and the perceptions of principals, mentors, and beginning teachers regarding their role. My professional background experiences and current work is in elementary education, hence this study was situated within an elementary setting. In conducting this study, I gained access to schools in North Dakota participating in the Teacher Support System (TSS) Mentor Program. I developed a professional connection with the coordinator of this program, and, as she was interested in my research topic, offered her assistance with establishing participant relationships.

I collaborated with the coordinator of TSS Mentor Program to find beginning teachers, mentors, and principal triads who are currently enrolled in the TSS Mentor Program. From these participants I worked with the District Performance Coach of a neighboring district to identify willing beginning teacher-mentor-principal triads to interview. The participants included four triads at four elementary sites. Due to the inherent confidential relationships involved in mentoring, this study included the review of documentation and processes of the TSS Mentor Program in lieu of observations.

By examining the practice of four elementary principals, in a district where the work of beginning teachers is taken seriously and where mentors are well-trained and well-supported, this study contributes to a greater understanding of principals' work in relationship to beginning teacher professional growth. Using the grounded theory methodology, this study lays the groundwork for further testing and theory-building across a larger section of individuals and sites within the state of North Dakota.

Assumptions

The premise of my overall argument that principals can play a significant role in supporting beginning teachers, and beginning teacher mentors rests on four suppositions:

1. Beginning teachers need support and induction that includes mentoring.

2. Beginning teachers need focused and intensive support in order to promote retention and professional growth.

3. Mentor support, as a stand-alone initiative, has less impact on beginning teachers' professional growth than within a comprehensive induction program.

4. Participating mentors are well-trained and well-supported through the TSS Mentor Program, a comprehensive induction program.

5. Principals are responsible for factors that directly and indirectly influence beginning teachers' experience.

Delimitations

As in all approaches to conducting research, there are delimitations to the inquiry conducted. Delimitations recognized for the qualitative research study:

1. I chose to focus my study on the role of elementary principals as my background and current work is in elementary education.

2. The research participants were selected from one Midwestern suburban district in North Dakota. Given the focused sample, the results are not generalizable.

3. The district selected participants in the North Dakota Teacher Support System. All research participants are affiliated with this state-sponsored induction program.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are integral to the study and these definitions clarify their meanings within the context of this study.

Beginning teachers: Used in this study to include first-year and new to the district participants. May also be used as the equivalent of "beginning teacher," "novice teacher," "mentee," and similar terms found in the induction literature. The state induction program supports districts in mentoring teachers who are new to the profession in their first year of teaching. The participating district has committed to mentoring all teachers new to the district, regardless of past experience, in their first two years of teaching.

Beginning Teacher Network: Beginning teachers participate in the Beginning Teacher Network funded by a grant through the TSS Mentor Program in conjunction with the South East Education Cooperative (SEEC). The workshops provide the opportunity for face-to-face collaboration among new teachers, development of professional relationships, and resources to enhance implementation of effective instructional practices. The three, one-day sessions take place during the school year: fall, winter and spring.

*Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching: R*esearch-based set of components of instruction. The activity of teaching is divided into 22 components clustered into four domains of teaching responsibility: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities.

Coaching: "A relationship between two equals, one of whom is committed to making personal and professional improvements" (Barkley & Bianco, 2011, p. 4).

Comprehensive Induction Program: The Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) described comprehensive induction as "a package of supports, development, and standards-based assessments provided to beginning teachers during at least their first two years of full time professional teaching" (p. 11). The participating district has chosen to create a comprehensive program by going above the state-led program.

District Student Performance Coach: Assists in the design and deployment of the district's instructional coaching, classroom support model and new teacher/induction.

Elementary Student Performance Coach: Works to positively impact student achievement at assigned sites through support, training, and coaching which build school and teacher capacity to increase classroom achievement.

Formal Mentoring Program: A systematic approach to organizing, training, and providing structure to support beginning teachers within an induction program.

Instructional Leadership: Behaviors such as making suggestions, giving feedback, modeling effective instruction, soliciting opinions, supporting collaboration, providing professional development opportunities, and giving praise for effective teaching (Blase & Blase, 2000).

Mentor: Experienced teachers who are formally assigned responsibility for working with beginning teachers over time. Induction literature may use this term to equate "support providers," "coaches," and "consulting teachers." The mentors in this study serve as Elementary Student Performance Coaches who have received formal and ongoing training and support.

Support: The interdependent work of beginning teacher assistance, development and assessment, all of which are critical to beginning teacher learning and development.

Triad: Three-way meetings, or triad meetings, allow mentors to strengthen the principal-mentor interactions to accelerate the professional growth of beginning teachers.

Acronyms

FAS: Formative Assessment and Support system; a comprehensive set of tools and protocols designed to guide mentor/beginning teacher interactions and to advance beginning teacher practice and student learning (New Teacher Center, 2014).

NTC: New Teacher Center works with schools districts, state policymakers, and educators across the country to develop and implement induction programs aligned with district learning goals.

PLC: Professional Learning Communities are composed of a collegial group of administrators and school staff who are united in their commitment to student learning.

SEEC: The South East Education Cooperative is a self-governing, collaborative organization established to enhance educational services for schools. SEEC assists schools in reaching their goals for student achievement. Specific to this study, SEEC supports the participating district by providing the Beginning Teacher Network.

SMART: Acronym for the five steps of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based goals.

TSS Mentor Program: The program is designed to support first-year teachers by providing them with professional development workshops and trained mentors. In 2009, the 61st North Dakota Legislative Assembly instituted the Teacher Support System Mentoring Program and funded in a $2.3 million appropriation through House Bill 1400

(www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/61-2009/bill-text/JARF1000.pdf). The aim of House Bill 1400 is to raise student achievement and teacher effectiveness through professional development and partnerships with local school districts, regional education agencies, institutions of higher education, and the Education Standards and Practices Board.

Organization of the Study

Chapter II will examine eight areas of literature related to the principal's role in mentoring and induction: (a) Principal's Role; (b) Support through Induction; (c) Mentor's Role; (d) Beginning Teacher Expectations; (e) Culture; (f) Relationships; (g) Teacher Retention; and (h) Supervision and Evaluation.

Chapter III includes an explanation of the research methods utilized for this qualitative study. The chapter includes a description of the research design, case selection, site selection, participant criteria, data collection, data analysis, verification, researcher's background and subjectivities, and ethical considerations.

Chapter IV includes the data findings obtained from the individual interviews of the participating triads. Participant responses are summarized in narrative form according to the five themes identified in the coding and analysis process.

Chapter V includes a discussion and summary of findings followed by conclusions, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research. The findings are summarized according to the research questions of the study. The chapter concludes with recommendations for induction leaders at the local, regional and national level.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The critical aspects of a successful induction program and the leadership role that the principal must assume are reflected in this research. The review of the literature found in this chapter spans a timeline since 1990, when the importance of the role of the principal in the induction of beginning teachers captured the attention of the researchers. It appears that all researchers have identified what needs to be provided for beginning teachers, as well as what has failed to be provided for them. There is a noticeable absence of empirical research existing to assist principals in meeting the challenges of working with beginning teachers. Recognizing this void, this study was conducted to determine what induction methods are most effective for principals and beginning teachers in elementary schools. The majority of the research dedicated to this work attempts to define best practices for principal, beginning teachers and mentors within mentoring and induction.

Beginning teacher support, more broadly defined, includes beginning teacher professional growth and evaluation. Within educational reform literature, the principal's role in mentoring programs is typically not mentioned. Wong (2004) viewed this as "one key to why mentoring programs rarely succeed" (p. 45). The work of supporting, developing, and evaluating beginning teachers is too big to fall on the shoulders of a single mentor; yet that is exactly what happens when mentoring is equated to induction

(Brock & Grady, 2001). Odell and Huling-Austin (2000) defined mentoring as the "professional practice that occurs in the context of induction whenever an experienced teacher supports, challenges, and guides beginning teachers in their teaching practice" (p. xv). A mentor is one component, although an important one, of an induction program. Induction is defined as a systematic, coherent, comprehensive training and support process for beginning teachers, as they transition from pre-service, which seamlessly becomes part of an ongoing professional development program to keep beginning teachers teaching and increasing their effectiveness (Brock & Grady, 2001; Wong, 2004).

Researchers have documented the innumerable benefits of induction; however elements of what constitutes induction vary greatly from state to state and within states. A glaring disconnect exists between what research identifies as best practice and the daily practice carried out in terms of designing comprehensive induction programs for beginning teachers (Nolan & Hoover, 2011).

Much of the research on the role of the principal in teacher induction occurred in the 1990s when many formal induction programs were in their infancy. Principals, now instructional leaders, moved from what earlier research called for as a need for a more hands-on approach with beginning teachers to a facilitative role, causing beginning teachers to see their principal's role as important yet mysterious. The literature suggests that principals offer limited direct assistance to beginning teachers and that beginning teachers seldom seek support and advice from those who formally evaluate their work (Sharratt & Sharratt, 1991). Pointing to the need, Ingersoll and Kralik's 2004 meta-analysis of induction research records the lack of research studies dedicated to the work of principals and beginning teachers.

Principal's Role

As mentor and induction programs have been developed in recent years, the role of the principal has been given little consideration (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Wood, 2005). The induction literature of the past two decades describes a shift from focusing on the role of the mentor, including the role of the principal as a support for beginning teachers (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). Research is clear that effective principal leadership can have a strong influence on the early teaching experience of a beginning teacher and is an essential element of a quality comprehensive induction program (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Odell & Huling-Austin, 1992; Watkins, 2011). However, literature is less clear in regards to the specific role the principal is to play in helping to meet the needs of beginning teachers' professional growth (Tillman, 2005).

Carver (2002) found that in existing studies, there is little mention of the principal's role related to beginning teacher induction and that it often happens "around" the principal (Scott, 2001). Although principals are called on to be instructional leaders, the research provides little clarity for principals to use in supporting and guiding beginning teachers (Brock & Grady, 1998). The role of the principal in supporting the induction phase of beginning teacher professional growth continues to be sparse and indecisive (Carver, 2002; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004).

Traditionally, the role of the principal has focused on management and operations (Moir, 2009). More recent research suggests the need for change within our schools in order to raise student achievement, with a consistent emphasis on the importance of the principal within the school. Wood (2005) highlighted the importance of principals in

working with beginning teachers and notes that they may play several important roles in beginning teacher induction, including that of "culture builder, instructional leader, coordinator/facilitator of mentors, recruiter, and beginning teacher advocate/retainer" (p. 39). Leithwood et al. (2004) identified specific leadership practices which considerably benefit professional growth of those they supervise. These characteristics included "offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support and providing an appropriate model" (p. 24).

Researchers and experts have typically limited their recommendations for principal involvement and support of induction to program advocacy and beginning-of-year orientations (Brock & Grady, 2001). Beginning teachers seldom seek support and advice from those who formally evaluate their work, yet principals continue to have the responsibility of evaluating beginning teachers and fostering workplace cultures that support their development. With those responsibilities, principals must play a larger role in supporting beginning teachers. Research indicates that school leaders can promote instructional growth among beginning teachers by insisting on quality mentoring, enculturation of beginning teachers into professional learning opportunities, and providing evaluations which focus on learning and professional growth (Wayne, Youngs, & Fleischman, 2005).

Principals are expected to identify the strengths and areas for improvement of beginning teachers, as well as to provide support to address those needs (Gimbert & Fultz, 2004; Melton, 2007). By acknowledging the beginning teachers' inexperience, and clarifying expectations early, the principal can greatly aid in the induction process (Brock, 1999; Weasmer & Woods, 1998). Without clear communication between

beginning teachers, principals, and mentors, beginning teachers will spend wasted time and energy trying to meet, unknown to them, expectations of the principal. Most beginning teachers feel a strong responsibility to meet the expectations of their principal. This may not only be due to the fact that beginning teachers feel a loyalty to the principal for hiring them, but also a sense of unease and fear related to the fact that the principal is also their evaluator (Carver, 2003).

Principals play a powerful and critical role in the effectiveness and leadership of any school in shaping a school culture. Principal power is derived from beliefs and values, skills and knowledge. The relationship between teacher and principal is of major importance in a teacher's work life. Brock & Grady (2001) noted the climate created by the principal will be a factor in beginning teacher success or failure. The principal has the power to create a workplace that is pleasant or unbearable. Principals have the power to praise or criticize teaching, offer or withhold resources, determine schedules and assignments, provide or refuse support, and recommend or not recommend continuing employment.

Leadership, by nature, contains an element of power and having influence over others. The principal, who determines the expectations for teaching and learning, is a key source of support and guidance for beginning teachers. They want to receive a good evaluation from the principal, and if principals do not state their expectations or affirm beginning teachers' efforts, they feel abandoned and frustrated (Brock & Grady, 2001). A supervisor serves as a coach, yet has positional authority to provide both feedback and direction (NTC, Reflections, 2009). Principals rely on a combination of positional and personal power sources to bring about change and promote quality education.

The influence of principals on the initial teaching experiences of beginning teachers is significant, if not profound (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). Principals who are knowledgeable about the issues affecting beginning teachers, proactive in supporting them, and committed to professional growth do make a significant difference (Watkins, 2011). The major goals of teacher induction, teacher retention and improvement of beginning teacher performance are integrally tied to the role of the principal (Johnson, 2004).

Policymakers are providing resources to make induction programs more comprehensive, but research shows that much depends on the principal. There is a need for principals to expand their work with beginning teachers beyond that of evaluator to include instructional support (Wayne et al., 2005). As the primary instructional and professional development leader of the school, the principal sets the professional and performance expectations and plays a critical role in the socialization and induction of beginning teachers (Brock & Grady, 2001; The Alliance for Excellent Education 2004). They should understand the goals of the induction program, as well as elements of teacher evaluation criteria (Wood, 2005) to ensure their own advice and support is aligned with the "goals of the program and vision of teaching that is being promoted" (Bartell, 2005, p. 49). Principals can work closely with mentors to focus on beginning teachers' professional and instructional growth (Youngs, 2002). Principals who understand the role of mentors and the professional development activities in which the beginning teacher will engage can ensure consistent messages are received by beginning teachers (Bartell, 2005).

The role of the principal is to lead the induction program and provide ongoing monitoring (Brock, 1999) as well as to work with mentors to focus on beginning teachers' professional growth (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Youngs, 2002). Effective principals implement meaningful mentoring programs that promote positive collegial interaction and support. It is important that principals are "supportive of and knowledgeable about the full range, purpose, and activities of the induction program" in order to best support induction activities and effectively work with those who mentor beginning teachers (Bartell, 2005, p. 50). This includes pairing beginning teachers with trained, experienced mentors while providing them time to meet and discuss their development (Brock & Grady, 1997, 1998; Johnson & Kardos, 2007; Melton, 2007; Quinn & D'Amato Andrews, 2004; Stansbury, 2001). The principal needs to meet with beginning teachers and mentors to clarify expectations for the program, the working relationship of participants, and the non-evaluative role of the mentor (Bartell, 2005). Throughout the process, principals should work with mentors and beginning teachers without breaking the confidentiality of the mentor-mentee relationship (Brock, 1999, Lieberman, et al., 2012; Watkins, 2011).

Support Through Induction

There is broad consensus amongst researchers for the idea that beginning teachers need support during their transition into professional practice (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Huling-Austin, 1992; Odell and Huling-Austin, 2000). Local and state-initiated mentoring programs provide support to teachers in their first year in the classroom. With the implementation of induction programs, the role of the principal in supporting beginning teachers has shifted from direct to indirect, nonetheless explicit support

(Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Stansbury, 2001). Principals indirectly contribute to student learning, through their influence on staff and the culture of their organizations (Leithwood et al., 2004). By concentrating on the supportive strategies described above, principals can increase the effectiveness of induction support for beginning teachers in their schools.

A thoughtful principal can ease induction from the beginning by anticipating difficulties, providing support, and becoming an advocate for budding professionals (Weasmer & Woods, 1998). Research demonstrates that a well-designed induction program is one that is based on the developmental needs of beginning teachers (Bartell, 2005; Danielson, 1996), offers differentiated individualized support by mentors (Huling-Austin, 1992; Wood, 2001), and is grounded in the school's culture (Alliance for Education, 2004; Brock & Grady, 1997).

The research of the early 80s reported most administrators believed they had good orientation programs, and principals who had major difficulties with beginning teachers were those that believed "colleges and universities turn out finished products" (Kurtz, 1983). Moir (2009) provided strong evidence that the principal can "trump even in the most potent and well-designed, carefully implemented induction or mentoring effort" (p. 3).

Which kinds of supports matter most in the development of teacher efficacy? Elliott et al. (2010) concluded that changes in efficacy during the first year of teaching were related to the level of support received through increased opportunities to practice and receive feedback from supervisors. When principals are involved in supporting beginning teachers, professional relationships among experienced and beginning teachers

are encouraged, morale is greatly improved and teacher efficacy is strengthened. When

they are assisted in their transition into teaching by principals, beginning teachers feel

supported as respected professionals (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Richards,

2004).

Mentor's Role

Principals, alongside mentors, can play a significant role in promoting beginning

teachers' growth and development (Bartell, 2005; Carver, 2003). Little is more important

in building effective induction programs than the principal and mentor relationship.

Principals and mentors should work together to ensure that beginning teachers receive

ongoing, sustained support, from instructional coaching to offering a shoulder to lean on

(Carver, 2003). Principals' clear understanding and articulation of the valuable role of the

mentor in induction is important (Heffner, 2009). Induction programs can be used to help

principals regularly communicate with mentors their expectations and concerns about

beginning teachers and to allow them a means of offering suggestions of support

(Watkins, 2011). Brock (1999) pointed out that "The success of beginning teachers is

critical to student success, and the success of both is largely the responsibility of the

principal" (p. 20). Additionally, Watkins (2011) found that principals can inform mentors

about "school needs, goals, procedures, policies, and practices, and how best to navigate

the school context" (p. 2).

Mentors can explain their role, share sample formative assessment tools, articulate

expectations for beginning teachers, and share professional learning opportunities offered

by the induction program. Mentors can ensure that principals understand the rationale for

confidentiality between beginning teachers and mentors and that they offer their support for it (Watkins, 2011).

Distributed leadership, inherent within induction programs, provides opportunities for beginning teachers and mentors to learn from one another. Through increased participation in decision making, greater commitment to organizational goals and strategies may develop. Leithwood et al. (2004) found mentoring to potentially increase teacher efficacy through job-embedded leadership development opportunities which may ultimately improve job performance and satisfaction for all staff.

Beginning Teacher Expectations

Beginning teachers can benefit from the alignment between the principal and mentor support (Watkins, 2011). Most beginning teachers report a need for the principal to provide support and assistance as they move through the induction period. Mentors provide assistance but are not a substitute for beginning teachers' need to interact with the principal (Brock & Grady, 1997).

Beginning teachers must know what is expected of them in terms of classroom management, documentation of student progress, implementation of curriculum, student and instructional strategies (Brock & Grady, 2001). With new initiatives and reforms being introduced, there are continuously new teacher expectations and competencies. It is imperative that teachers and principals share and discuss their perceptions of teacher competency to ensure their expectations are aligned (Quinn & D'Amato Andrews, 2004; Watkins, 2005; Wong, 2004). Beginning teachers want to know their principal's goals and expectations for teaching.

Above all, beginning teachers want the principal to communicate the prevailing criteria for good teaching (Brock & Grady, 1998). Beginning teachers need to understand their roles and responsibilities, as well as their position in the school organization in order to be effective instructors. Highly effective principals share expectation information in an efficient manner to increase beginning teacher effectiveness (Melton, 2007).

Beginning teachers identify the principal as a key figure in their assistance and support. Knowing the principal's expectations for instructional practices, grading, and student achievement seems to be more important to beginning teachers than any advice given by their mentor (Colley, 2002). While the mentor's classroom experiences are valuable, knowing the principal's expectations for instructional methods, time management, discipline, grading, student achievement, and parent relationships is essential (Brock, 1999). Sharing examples of the established ways of doing things provides examples of acceptable standards of behavior. Although beginning teachers need and appreciate the assistance of mentors, the principal is the person they believe they need to please. The principal is the person likely responsible for them being hired and the individual who will evaluate their teaching (Brock, 1999). Thus, beginning teachers want and deserve feedback from the principal.

A teacher who can immediately reach out to the principal may be able to keep small problems from escalating into major ones (Colley, 2002). It is when the principal's support and affirmation is absent that beginning teachers feel abandoned, and they lack the resources to succeed (Brock, 1999). If beginning teachers are not able to fully understand the roles and responsibilities that their principals expect them to fulfill, it may lead to increased frustration. That frustration can lead to dissatisfaction and, ultimately, teacher

turnover (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Without support from a variety of sources, beginning teachers can be overwhelmed by the diverse expectations imposed on them by principal, colleagues, students and parents (Weasmer & Woods, 1998). Beginning teachers need assistance from both principals and mentors. Each provides unique perspectives, with the mentors' work complementing that of the principal (Brock & Grady, 1997). Beginning teachers report the desire for ongoing observations and feedback, but classroom visits by colleagues and administrators are rare (Johnson et al., 2001).

Induction research by The Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) revealed that "induction works best when it is systematically embedded in the culture of a school," (p. 22). Mentoring and induction programs can be limited when they are not embedded within a professional culture that values and supports the relationships and activities. Johnson et al. (2001) reported the importance of principals' support of beginning teachers in reflecting on their classroom practice, understanding the school culture, and transferring and adjusting what they have learned in their teacher preparation programs to the professional culture. Tillman (2005) stated that principals who intentionally focus on mentoring can accelerate the beginning teacher's professional growth and support the teacher transfer of knowledge and skills to the school setting. This culture must be built intentionally with the principal serving as the primary builder of the professional capital of the school's teachers and its culture (Colley, 2002; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Culture

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) reported that principals, as instructional leaders, have the ability to systematically embed appropriate induction practices into school culture. Highly effective principals promote and maintain a positive

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school culture, supporting beginning teachers in adapting to and becoming active participants in the school's culture (Johnson & Kardos, 2007; Watkins, 2005; Wood, 2005). Mentors report that when principals are knowledgeable about and support professional "habits of mind," the system is influenced, and induction program goals become "standard practice for all teachers" in their work (Chako, 2009, p. 5). Supporting the success of beginning teachers is cited by Heffner (2009) as the most significant contribution the principal makes as it can define the principal's legacy by "shaping the school's culture and realizing the principal's vision" (p. 1).

Creating a supportive culture that encourages teacher autonomy, fosters inquiry, and allows opportunity for learning and mutual support is the responsibility of the principal (Heffner, 2009). Principals must assist beginning teachers in understanding the environment in which they work and support them in identifying their role as members of a community of learners (Gimbert & Fultz, 2004). Efforts such as these must embrace the beginning teacher, encouraging them to share different perspectives and open minds to new ideas (Watkins, 2011).

Beginning teachers desire to be contributing members of the school culture (Watkins, 2005). In developing a community of learners, the principal must work with teachers to create a common vision and goals and to make decisions based on shared experiences and results. Most importantly, this must be a community willing to accept and value perspectives offered by beginning teachers (Tucker & Codding, 2002).

Encouraging beginning teachers to take control of how they teach and setting high expectations for student achievement, all within a nurturing environment, is the responsibility of the principal (Watkins, 2005).With heightened pressure and

accountability to close the educational achievement gap, creating a welcoming and nurturing environment in which beginning teachers can become successful is a top priority (Heffner, 2009). The principal must work toward the creation of a common school language to talk about and reflect on classroom teaching and the encouragement of a culture that constantly seeks to refine and extend classroom teaching strategies (Tucker & Codding, 2002). Through deliberately focusing on mentoring, principals can enhance the beginning teachers' personal and professional development and help them transfer and adjust what they have learned in their teacher education programs to the school context (Tillman 2005).

Relationships

Beginning teachers often report dissatisfaction with their attempts to build relationships with school leaders (Brock & Grady; 1998, 2007; Melton, 2007). Although principals are busy people, it is important that they take time to get to know beginning teachers in their school and establish working relationships with them (Carver, 2003). Fullan (2001) stated "relationships are paramount" (p. 76) in helping teachers feel empowered, valued and committed to the school. Therefore, principals can increase teacher retention through building professional relationships in which teachers feel valued, encouraging teacher collaboration and involving teachers in the decision making process. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) asserted that in order to change people's actions and beliefs, one has to change "patterns of communication and build new kinds of relationships among them" (p. 104).

The limited interaction beginning teachers have with principals and the principal's role as evaluator can hinder the development of open and trusting relationships (Hughes,

1999). The question of whether a teacher's supervisor should also evaluate that teacher stimulates continuous discussion. However, principals must be actively involved in and available to assist with the needs and concerns of beginning teachers, as well as build relationships and trust with them, using communication skills that reflect a "non-combative, open style where questions and concerns are welcomed" (Gimbert & Fultz, 2004, p. 3).

Carver (2003) suggested that the principal "maintain regular personal communication with the beginning teacher" (p. 35). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) asserted that the principal should practice professionalism and build relationships with the teachers, knowing that these two factors are keys to establishing a culture of professional respect and collegiality. Principals should recognize the importance of perception when dealing with beginning teacher success. Encouragement and empowerment have a positive effect on teacher self-perception (Melton, 2007). Principals must also enter into a new relationship with a beginning teacher with a positive attitude and a sense of perceived success for the teacher. Research has supported the notion that beginning teachers felt more accepted by their colleagues when it was perceived that they were initially accepted by their principal (Quinn & D'Amato Andrews, 2004).

Teacher Retention

Ellen Moir (2009), Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the New Teacher Center cited the positive impact of a strong principal, who has "created a caring and ambitious school learning community," will improve beginning teacher retention and advance their professional growth (p. 1). Resourceful incentives are being put forth to attract beginning teachers, but only improving the school culture will retain and support

beginning teachers (Johnson et al., 2001). Principals fill many important roles, but none more important than the retention and professional growth of beginning teachers (Watkins, 2011). Beginning teachers are often quickly overwhelmed by daily teaching routines and frustrated in their attempts to understand the school's formal and informal culture (Brock & Grady; 1998, 2007; Melton, 2007).

According to recent MetLife Surveys of the American Teacher, most beginning teachers say they are very satisfied with their relationships with other teachers. Teachers who are most likely to leave the profession are those who are less satisfied than others with their relationships with their principal. They are less likely to strongly agree that their principal created an environment which helped them be an effective teacher, asked for their suggestions, showed appreciation for their work, and treated them with respect. They enter the profession expecting the principal to help them become better teachers (MetLife, 2008).

Research reveals that lack of support from their principals is one of the most often reported causes of a beginning teacher's decision to leave the profession (Watkins, 2011). The pace at which beginning teachers adjust and grow, choosing to either stay or leave the profession appears to be related to their principal's involvement in their work (Colley, 2002). Unclear expectations of principal's role with beginning teachers as well as lack of or poor quality support from principals are commonly reported by beginning teachers as problems and/or reasons for leaving the profession, (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Brock & Grady, 1997; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Richards, 2004). Johnson and Birkeland (2003) reported that beginning teachers regularly requested a transfer from a school because a principal was frequently "aloof or inaccessible at times when a

beginning teacher expressed anxiety or distress" (p. 3). Recent evidence suggests that the principal's personal attention to beginning teachers increases their enthusiasm and optimism, reduces frustration, communicates a sense of mission and indirectly increases performance (Leithwood et al., 2004).

There is a high rate of beginning teacher attrition, with 20-50% of beginning teachers leaving the teaching profession within the first five years (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). Many beginning teachers leave the profession because of poor working conditions, including low pay and status. Others leave because of a lack of support from principals, colleagues, students, and parents (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). The alarming departure is intensified by the fact that they typically are assigned to the most undesirable classes and extracurricular activities. This is where principals must step in to provide support as instructional leaders, culture builders, and mentor coordinators, creating environments in which beginning teachers are able to thrive (Colley, 2002). Principals who lead effective induction programs imbed induction into the culture of the school, retaining and providing professional growth for teachers (Brock & Grady, 2001).

Supervision and Evaluation

Principals are responsible for balancing the support, supervision and evaluation of beginning teachers with the lack of classroom experience (Elliott et al., 2010). What the principal knows, believes, and can do is vital to beginning teacher success, professional growth, and retention (Saphier, Freedman, & Aschheim, 2001). Many induction programs are built on the belief that a clear line must be drawn between mentoring and evaluating. Mentors are typically trained to maintain confidentiality and not share judgments about their beginning teachers with principals (Davis & Bloom, 1998; Saphier

et al., 2001). The dilemma faced by principals regarding assistance versus assessment continues to be problematic (Brock & Grady, 2001). The focus and emphasis on supervision of beginning teachers makes sense; what doesn't make sense is the glaring absence of guidance or clarity on the principal's involvement in the process (Hughes, 1999).

Principals, more than anyone else, are most impacted by the everyday realities of teacher turnover (Elliott et al., 2010). The principal is typically responsible for the hiring, evaluation, continuing professional growth, and integration of beginning teachers into the school culture (Elliott et al., 2010). Supervision and evaluation systems in school districts transmit the culture of the district (Saphier et al., 2001). Principals report spending considerable amounts of time addressing the problems of beginning teachers, who may be vulnerable because of inexperience, and may need special attention during the induction phase (Elliott et al., 2010; Hughes, 1999). This calls for the need of principal to provide a clear explanation of the evaluation process with beginning teachers early in the year. This orientation is followed by discussions with the mentor to further clarify the process and expectations (Nolan & Hoover, 2011).

There is well-documented agreement among researchers that in order to have quality teaching, the beginning teacher must be intensively supervised (Hughes, 1999). This intensity, paired with using professional teaching standards, thoughtful support and evaluation processes, will provide beginning teachers the feedback necessary for professional growth (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Instructional leadership within an effective evaluation system provides frequent feedback to beginning teachers and offers opportunities to experiment, refine practice and grow professionally (Colley, 2002;

Saphier et al., 2001). By combining mentoring and supervision, principals can support

beginning teachers in gaining skills, attitudes, and instructional strategies (Saphier et al.,

2001).

Retention policies vary from district to district, but most districts continue to give

responsibility for retention decisions to principals. While the formative assessment of

teaching practice, including judgments made about strengths and areas of concerns, is

confidential between mentor and beginning teacher, some suggest that the principal be

kept informed of areas, such as lesson planning or classroom management, in which the

pair is working (Stansbury, 2001).

A key component of successful induction programs is ongoing and responsive

feedback, provided through formative assessment, embedded in a system focused on

professional growth, and based on multiple data sources (Saphier, et.al, 2001; Weasmer

& Woods, 1998). Induction programs differ in the extent to which they structure

formative assessment for support and evaluation for retention. Often, induction program

formative assessment methods are separate from district evaluation processes (Watkins,

2011). Comprehensive induction programs must include supervision and evaluation

because these tasks are clearly a part of the program of support that surrounds beginning

teachers and impacts their effectiveness (Saphier, et al., 2001). This results in less

confusion and a clearer articulation of both the purpose of formative assessments and the

role of the principal in guiding beginning teacher professional growth (Stansbury, 2001).

Bloom (2009) suggested that effective principals provide developmental

supervision and evaluation focused on the professional growth of beginning teachers into

highly skilled professionals. Supervision of beginning teachers is linked to teacher

efficacy. Jacob and Lefgren (2007) suggested the principals should use their knowledge and vast professional experience to provide appropriate professional growth opportunities, directly related to the needs of each individual teacher. Beginning teachers may have a "false sense of self-efficacy" due to a lack of feedback and support (Elliott et al., 2010, p. 136). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) explained that with the traditional role of teachers teaching in isolation, along with a lack of meaningful feedback from principals, it is not surprising that teachers do not look to these as the main sources to inform their efficacy judgments.

Saphier et al. (2001) suggested that supervision and evaluation programs should convey the culture of the school and that these systems should focus on professional growth and development (p. 82). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) described a collaborative culture as a setting of shared knowledge and ideas, with explicit assistance and support, helping teachers become more effective, confident, and "open to and actively engaged in improvement and change" (p. 114).

No longer under the guidance and watchful eyes of a cooperating teacher and university supervisor, even the most well-prepared beginning teachers need time and assistance to improve their skills with support from their principal, mentor and other experts (Bartell, 2005; Elliott et al., 2010). This guidance includes reflection and collaboration with colleagues as they develop good judgment and knowledge about teaching and learning (Nolan & Hoover, 2011). Elliott et al. (2010) reported that once teachers complete their formal preparation, principals are responsible for fostering teachers' growth and successful integration into the staff and profession. This idea of

continued support, supervision, and professional development beyond formal training and certification is what ultimately results in teacher quality" (p. 135).

One thing that we can agree on is that effective principals both evaluate and coach (Bloom, 2009). Evaluation is the responsibility of the principal. Beginning teachers want to please the person responsible for their evaluation. Principals must clearly state their expectations and standards for good teaching and model acceptable ways of doing things (Brock, 1999). Taking a developmental approach to supervision, principals can support beginning teachers by coaching skills, attitudes and a range of strategies (Saphier et al., 2001). Lieberman et al. (2012) acknowledged the tension between coaching for growth and supervisorial feedback can make the principal-mentor partnership challenging, creating the need for a balance of roles serving as a developmental leader, while still being an evaluator with a specific responsibility.

Brock (1999) pointed out that "The success of beginning teachers is critical to student success, and the success of both is largely the responsibility of the principal" (p. 20). Given the significance of the principal's responsibilities, providing a beginning teacher induction program that includes mentors should be a top priority (Brock, 1999). Effective mentor programs require the support of the faculty and all levels of the school's administration, including the superintendent and school board. The principal, however, is the pivotal figure whose direct involvement in each step of the program's development and implementation is crucial. Principals who understand the benefits and are willing to invest the time required in developing and maintaining effective mentor programs will be rewarded richly with successful and quality beginning teachers (Brock, 1999). Well-matched mentors, instructional leadership, collaborative cultures, observation and

feedback, and inspired leadership all support beginning teachers in ways that recruitment incentives never can (Johnson et al., 2001).

Description of Next Chapter

Chapter III includes an explanation of the research methods utilized for this qualitative study. The chapter includes a description of the research design, case selection, site selection, participant criteria, data collection, data analysis, verification, researcher's background and subjectivities, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This qualitative research study explored perceptions of beginning teachers, mentors and principals and to clearly define the specific role of the principal in promoting beginning teacher professional growth within a comprehensive induction program. This study utilized qualitative research methods to identify the key role principals play in beginning teachers support.

Pilot Study Leads to New Questions

In preparation for this study, I conducted a small-scale pilot study in one North Dakota suburban elementary school. I interviewed an elementary triad regarding their perceptions of the principal's role in beginning teacher induction. As this site was participating in the state sponsored induction program with trained mentors, I believed they could provide a model of how the effective principals work with beginning teachers and their mentors in the induction process. The site was selected based on a suggestion from the district's Student Performance Coach who felt this building principal would be willing to participate as well as encourage mentors and beginning teachers to participate as well. I know this principal from past professional work and, based upon the recommendation from the performance coach, contacted the principal to invite participation.

The purpose of the pilot study was to examine the perceptions of beginning teachers, mentors and principals regarding the role of the principal in supporting beginning teacher induction. Interviews were conducted with beginning teachers, mentors and principals to address the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of elementary principals regarding their role in the induction of beginning teachers?

2. What are the perceptions of mentors regarding the role of principals in the induction of beginning teachers?

3. What are the perceptions of beginning elementary teachers regarding the role of principals in the induction process?

4. How do beginning teachers' perceptions differ from principals' perceptions, regarding the importance of elementary principal's role in supporting teacher induction?

The coding of transcribed interview data of the pilot study revealed four categories: (a) Role of the Principal; (b) Program Specifications; (c) Roles; and (d) Underlying Priorities. One contextual and two intervening conditions had direct impact on the development of the themes: (a) principal trained as a mentor as well as having completed the administrative training within the comprehensive induction program; (b) fear of judgment/evaluation; and (c) culture of accountability. Two themes emerged: (a) lack of communication between mentor and principal; and (b) confusion for the beginning teacher. From these themes, two assertions emerged: (a) lack of clarity in working with and supporting beginning teachers; and (b) universal respect for the work and character of the principal.

Analysis of participants' responses within this initial study led to three consistent agreements: (a) the strength of the mentor program to build capacity in beginning teachers; (b) the positive culture within the building which was mainly credited to the work of the principal; and (c) confusion regarding the role of the principal within the induction program.

Based on this initial study, a reasonable next step was to seek a clearer picture of principals' interactions with and beliefs about beginning teachers and mentors, where these ideas come from and what implications they may have for beginning teacher retention and professional growth; answers missing from the literature. The findings of this initial study revealed a conflict between reported beliefs of participants and practices of the principal within the existence of a comprehensive induction program. These findings provided a foundation for further study which will be described below in detail.

This chapter will present the research design of the current study including the researcher's background and subjectivities, case selection, data collection, data analysis, verification, and ethical considerations. This study utilizes grounded theory methods to provide an in-depth study supported by a variety of data collection methods. Data collection includes semi-structured interviews along with the review of school, district, and state mentoring and induction program documents. This data provides answers and direction regarding the research questions of this study:

1. How do the backgrounds, beliefs and actions of elementary principals regarding leadership, induction, and teacher evaluation influence beginning teacher experiences within the context of a statewide induction program?

2. How do principals support, develop and assess beginning teachers?

3. How do beginning teachers and their mentors experience interactions with principals?

4. How do these interactions between the principal, beginning teachers, and mentors impact teacher professional growth?

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods of inquiry have several basic characteristics which informed the design of this study. First, qualitative research takes place in the participants' natural setting as it is based upon the assumptions that reality is socially constructed and can best be understood in its true setting (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2011). The research took place within the context of the comprehensive induction program, focusing on elementary staff. Additionally, through coding transcripts, themes are allowed to emerge from the data, rather than being specified before data analysis. All transcribing and coding was completed utilizing a digital recorder and HyperRESEARCH©. Qualitative data analysis computer programs store and organize data, enabling researchers to assign codes to data and facilitate searching through the data to locate specific words or phrases (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research is interpretive, and viewed through the lens of the researcher to see the complete picture taking place. By interviewing all members of the study triads, I was be able to interpret and analyze each participant's lived story and through analysis of the data, combine these together to tell their story within the induction environment. Finally, qualitative researchers often select a specific mode of inquiry to serve as a guide for the study. This study utilizes qualitative methodology to explore the principal's role in beginning teacher professional growth.

Research Design

Qualitative research examines participants' words and actions in narrative or descriptive way, and is "interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). Qualitative research methods were utilized to closely examine how four elementary principals, mentors and their beginning teachers in one North Dakota school district thought about their work within a comprehensive induction program. A basic grounded theory approach was used, including semi-structured interviewing and document analysis.

My first goal was to uncover the experiences of the study participants, regarding mentoring and induction, and then explain what accounts for this. This allowed me to identify what actions and interactions are taken by effective principals to support beginning teachers and mentors. As a result, these four self-reports of practice, gained through interviews, became a means for thinking more deeply about beginning teacher support, professional growth and assessment by principals.

Data was analyzed through an inductive process to uncover the common themes and patterns across the data to provide an understanding of the actual experiences of the participants (Ary et al, 2005; Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2002). In the process of coding, I found myself coming up with more questions for the principals. I contacted the participating principals and arranged an additional meeting time with three of the four participating principals. The fourth principal asked if we could communicate via email to which I agreed.

Next, an analysis was conducted to look for emerging patterns across the data. I utilized triangulation by comparing data from the interviews, reflective memos, and document review. Even though the four triads were participating in the TSS Mentor Program, following consistent guidelines and expectations, the data was demonstrating varying levels of principal involvement and expectations. This caused me to categorize the data by triad. These categories provided thick, rich, descriptive accounts, framed by the concept or theory revealed (Merriam, 2002).

Current research has provided acknowledgement of the importance of principals' work with beginning teachers and their mentors, but has failed to fully examine the complexities of the relationship and possible benefits. This qualitative study captures the essence of the relationship between beginning teachers, mentors and principal. The qualitative nature of the questions posed, provided guidance for the design of this study.

State-wide Mentor Induction Program

The TSS Mentor Program is organized around projects throughout the state, which includes five districts and seven regional education associations, each of which is overseen by its own project coordinator. Mentors are chosen by building administrators and then trained through the TSS Mentor Program. Mentors are paid a $1,600 stipend for the year which includes training and meeting times expected by the program. For first-year teachers, participation is voluntary and unpaid. It is up to individual participating districts to determine if participation is required or voluntary. The participating district supports beginning teachers who are new to the field of education as well as new to the district, regardless of past experience.

The TSS Mentor Program includes a two-day training session for mentors, an online training session for building principals, and half-day new teacher and mentor seminars. Training sessions are provided each semester at regional locations across the state. During the academic year, mentors and beginning teachers are expected to meet 18 times per semester for support, to conduct classroom observations, and to provide instructional feedback. The participating district partners with the New Teacher Center (NTC) and the regional education association (SEEC) to provide additional training and support to mentors, principals and beginning teachers.

While this study drew primarily on interview data, secondary data was collected: interviews with induction program personnel, as well as documents collected from TSS Mentor Program and the district's mentoring and induction program. The TSS Mentor Program has a required online training for participating building principals. This training is designed to answer the following questions:

1. What do I need to know about the Teacher Support System Mentoring Program and what are my responsibilities?

2. Why is mentoring important?

3. How do I select the best mentor for my new teachers?

4. And what can and should I do to support new teachers in my building?

Additionally, a Coaches' Academy was instituted in the 2010-2011 academic year. The Coaches' Academy trains instructional coaches, master teachers, and individuals within school districts in support roles or directly with classroom teachers to improve their instructional skills. The participating district requires their Student Performance Coaches, who also serve as mentors, to participate in the Coaches Academy.

Case Selection

Gatekeepers, individuals who have an official or unofficial role at the site, can provide access to a site and assist researchers in locating participants (Glesne, 2011). In conducting this study, I developed professional connections with the coordinator of the TSS Mentor Program and the district performance coach. Both provided support for my research by assisting in accessing viable project participants (Appendix A).

Site Selection

Purposeful sampling, where researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to discover, gain insight or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002) was utilized. I looked first to a site where induction programming was well-established and mentoring practice well defined. Within this site, I sought participants similar enough to address the topic, yet diverse enough to show an interesting range of responses.

The participants for this study included four triads within a North Dakota district associated with the TSS Mentor Program. Each mentor in this district supports one or two beginning teachers each year. For purposes of this study, all beginning teachers of participating mentors were included. The data collected in the initial study was used to inform the dissertation research, but was not be used in the final report. Additionally, the beginning teachers, mentors, and principal from the pilot study were not asked to participate in this larger study. All elementary sites in the district which had beginning teachers being formally mentored were asked to participate. Five of the 10 sites met the criteria and four triads agreed to participate. All interview participants were required to sign consent to participate form (Appendix A).

Participant Criteria

Pseudonyms were assigned to school sites and participants to "consciously consider and protect the rights of participants to privacy" (Glesne, 2011, p. 172). For the benefit of the reader, a listing of the schools and participant pseudonyms are listed below:

Oakdale Public School District: Implemented a state-sponsored formal mentoring and induction program beginning in 2011.

Principals: Marty, Jessica, Bob, and Jack

Mentors: Lori, Erika, Stacy, and Richard

Beginning Teachers: Julie, Mike, Kari, Jana, and Emily

Triad 1: Marty, Lori, and Julie

Triad 2: Jessica, Erika, Mike, and Kari (two beginning teachers in the same building, supported by Erika as a mentor)

Triad 3: Bob, Stacy, and Jana

Triad 4: Jack, Richard, and Emily

Selection criteria for beginning teachers at study sites included (a) representative grade levels, Kindergarten through Grade 5, in the sample; and (b) participation in the TSS Mentor Program. The TSS Mentor Program required principals to complete an online training and mentors to participate in a formalized training at the onset of their work. Additionally, Oakdale provided professional learning opportunities for principals three times a year—fall, winter, and spring. Principals were strongly encouraged but not required to attend.

Mentors were required to participate in a two-day training provided by TSS Mentor Program. TSS Mentor Program also provided mentors the option of participating

in an online course taking place throughout the year. Additionally, Oakdale provided required ongoing professional development through monthly mentor forums.

The district's beginning teachers participated in the Beginning Teacher Network, funded by a grant through the TSS Mentor Program in conjunction with the SEEC. The workshops provided the opportunity for face-to-face collaboration among beginning teachers, development of professional relationships, and resources to enhance implementation of effective instructional practices. The three, one-day sessions took place during the school year: fall, winter and spring. Oakdale requires beginning teachers to attend after-school new teacher meetings designed to deepen their knowledge of the professional teaching standards and district vision and philosophy. These take place on a monthly basis throughout the school year, with beginning teachers required to attend a minimum of five sessions. Additionally, the district required beginning teachers to attend two days of orientation prior to the start of the school year. These days were operational in nature of exploring technology, acquiring resources, and completing required paperwork.

This district went above and beyond the state program requirements to create an innovative program which included a deliberate focus on the role of the principal, providing a possible "data base for future comparison and theory building" (Merriam, 2002, p. 27).

Description of the Setting

The Oakdale Public School District is a mid-sized, suburban public school district in North Dakota. The district's student enrollment at the time of the study was 7,500 students K-12 attending the 15 school sites. In the 2012-2013 school year, 27 first-year

teachers, 10 participating principals, and 27 mentors at the 10 district sites participated in the TSS Mentor Program.

The mentors, at the elementary level, also served as student performance coaches as defined by the Sixty-first Legislative Assembly, North Dakota House Bill No. 1400 as defined in Section 6, Chapter 15.1-07 of the North Dakota Century Code. Beginning with the 2010-11 school year, school districts were required to have available one student performance strategist for every four hundred students in kindergarten through grade three. The positions were loosely defined as providing tutoring to students, and instructional coaching to teachers. Oakdale defined performance strategist as assisting in the design and deployment of the District's Instructional Coaching and Classroom Support Model. Districts then created job descriptions specific to their needs. Oakdale's job description is included in Appendix E.

Participants

In order to gain support from participants, I conveyed the expectations of them as participants, as well as informed them of the purpose of the study. All participants provided consent to be studied. I received permission (Appendix A) from the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board (Appendix A) as well as the district's Assistant Superintendent to conduct research in Oakdale Public Schools. Additionally, participant consent forms (Appendix A) were read and signed by each study participant.

<div align="center">

Data Collection

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Grounded theory is a formalized approach that accounts for the significant information in the data as it emerges (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Participating principals, mentors, and their beginning teachers were interviewed regarding the induction program

and their role, as well as their perceptions of the principal's role utilizing semi-structured interviews. Three interview instruments were developed, three for principals (Appendix B), one for mentors (Appendix C), and one for beginning teachers (Appendix D). For most subjects, their participation involved short, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews of 30 to 45 minutes conducted in a private setting at the school site. Beginning teachers and mentors were interviewed one time and principals were interviewed three times. Each interview was digitally recorded with participants' permission and transcribed for analysis. Throughout this research an audit trail was created, member checks conducted and the use of reflective journaling to validate the interview data (Creswell, 2007).

I spent time studying the information and expectations set forth for principals by the TSS Mentor Program and compared these parameters to the self-reported perceptions of the participating principals. Due to the inherent confidential relationships involved in mentoring, this study included the review of documentation and processes of the TSS Mentor Program in lieu of observations.

Data Analysis

Several of the grounded theory techniques for data collection were utilized in this study. The data collected was in the form of interview transcripts, written documents, and memos. The data analysis followed several steps. First, each participant interview was transcribed. Member checks of the transcribed interview data were conducted to assure the accuracy of the data and allow for the addition of any missing or inaccurate information. The interview transcripts were imported into HyperRESEARCH© where I utilized a recursive process of grounded theory to build theory from descriptive data "grounded" in real-life situations.

Open Coding

After interviews were transcribed, I reviewed the purpose of the study as well as the research questions. I carefully read through each transcript and used the analytical process called "open coding" to identify common concepts and categories found in the data (Creswell, 2007; Straus & Corbin, 1998). According to Allen (2000), it is the common themes or concepts that lead to the emergence of theory. Creswell (2007) described the coding process as the segmenting and labeling of text to form description and broad categories in the data. I divided the data into sentences and paragraphs of information while noting broad themes and codes that emerged from the data. The codes were essentially key words, statements, or quotes representing my observations and the participants' views and experiences relevant to the topic of study. Codes were then categorized; a process which groups like codes together (Razavieh et al., 2005).

The open coding process resulted in six broad categories that summarized the similar findings within the data including:

- Culture/Climate: Communication, confidentiality, culture, relationships, culture and trust

- Leadership: Instructional leadership, leadership style, principal as manager

- Perceptions: Beginning teacher, mentor and principal perceptions, and principal challenges

- Principal Actions: Goal setting, principal expectations, principal feedback, principal support, principal work with beginning teachers, principal work with mentors, professional growth, supervision and evaluation, triad

- Principal Experiences and Beliefs: College preparation, hiring practices and beliefs, mentoring principals, past experiences impacting career, principal beliefs and vision

- Program in Practice: Mentor role, mentor training, mentors work with beginning teachers, program impact, program understanding

Axial Coding

After categories had been determined, I administered second cycle coding, using the axial coding process to explore the relationship of categories and make connections between them. Five themes emerged from the categories: (a) healthy school cultures and trusting relationships influenced beginning teacher professional growth; (b) beginning teachers relied on their mentors to prepare them to be successful in the eyes of their principals; (c) the mentoring and induction program structure influenced beginning teacher's experience; (d) supervision and evaluation promoted beginning teacher growth within the structured mentoring and induction program; and (e) all participants benefitted from the mentoring experience when communication occurs within the triad.

Assertion

This coding process assisted me in organizing themes into a theoretical model (see Figure 4) and examining the interrelations of these themes to form a theory or assertion (Creswell, 2007; Straus & Corbin, 1998). The following assertion was extracted from the codes, categories, and themes: Individual participating principals' beliefs, dispositions and actions set the tone for the work of the mentoring and induction program at their school sites. The absence of systematic and consistent principal interaction limits opportunities for consistent feedback, the development of trusting relationships and

professional growth for all teachers. Creswell (2007) defined an assertion as "The last step in the analysis, where the researcher makes sense of the data and provides an interpretation of the data couched in terms of personal views or in terms of theories or constructs in the literature" (p. 244).

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Codes	Codes	Codes	Codes	Codes
Communication Confidentiality Culture Relationships Trust	Beginning Teacher Perceptions Mentor Perceptions Principal Perceptions	**Leadership** Instructional Leadership Leadership Style Principal as Manager **Principal Experiences and Beliefs** College Preparation Hiring Practices and Beliefs Mentoring Principals Past Experiences Impacting Career Principal Beliefs and Vision	Goal Setting Principal Expectations Principal Feedback Principal Support Principals work with Beginning Teachers Principals work with Mentors Professional Growth Supervision and Evaluation Triad	Mentor Role Mentor Training Mentors work with Beginning Teachers Program Impact Program Understanding

Category 1 Culture and Climate	Category 2 Perceptions	Category 3 Leadership Style and Development	Category 4 Principals Set the Tone for the Work	Category 5 Program in Practice
Theme 1 Healthy School Cultures and Trusting Relationships Influenced Beginning Teacher Professional Growth	Theme 2 Beginning Teachers Rely on their Mentors to Prepared them to be Successful in the Eyes of their Principals	Theme 3 All Participants Benefitted from the Mentoring Experience when Communication Occurred within the Triad	Theme 4 Principals Actions Regarding Supervision, Evaluation and Feedback Impacted Beginning Teacher Growth	Theme 5 The Mentoring and Induction Program Structure Influenced Beginning Teacher's Experience

Sub-Themes
Mentors viewed as Formative and Principals as Summative
Goal Oriented Work
Assessing Beginning Teacher Growth and Effectiveness

Sub-Themes
Growth Oriented Teacher Evaluation
Clear Direction from Principal
Working Collaboratively to Support Beginning Teacher Growth

Final Assertion

Individual principals' beliefs, dispositions and actions set the tone for the work of the mentoring and induction program at their school site. The absence of systematic and consistent principal interaction limits opportunities for consistent feedback, the development of trusting relationships and professional growth for all teachers.

Figure 4. Code Map for Data Analysis.

Verification

Due to the confidential relationships of beginning teachers and mentors, observations of their work were not possible within the scope of this study. Principal self-reported data, verified through mentor and beginning teacher accounts validated my findings.

Two analytical strategies enhanced the internal validity of my data: triangulation of principal self-report with mentor and beginning teacher accounts, as well as member-checking through principal review of the early case drafts (Glesne, 2011). As an adaptation to ethical constraints I did not share the early case drafts with beginning teachers or mentors. Out of respect for the current structures and relationships of the participating triads, I did not want to have what could be considered negative findings impacting relationships. Additionally, as a researcher having been given the opportunity and privilege to look inside the relationships, I did not want to offend any of the participants. I do not believe that through 17 focused interviews I fully understand participants' commitments, beliefs and motivations regarding beginning teacher professional growth. However, this research process allowed me to gain valuable insights which have the potential to impact future work and design of induction programs. As the researcher, my job was to listen carefully and record wisely that which I see and hear. Furthermore, because my access to observation data was limited in this study, principal self-reports, verified to the extent possible through select beginning teacher and mentor accounts, provided the necessary data. Beginning with the careful study of four beginning teacher-mentor-principal triads in one district, this study lays the groundwork for further

testing and theory-building across a larger section of individuals and sites in North Dakota.

Researcher's Background and Subjectivities

Creswell (2007) reminded researchers to "explicitly identify their biases, values, and personal interests about their research topic and process" (p. 184). When serving as an elementary principal, it would have been to everyone's advantage for me to effectively communicate with the mentors of my beginning teachers. This communication would have guided the mentors support to best match and align with the expectations I had of my beginning teachers and their mentors. Now in the role of Assistant Superintendent, I often see principals and mentors confusing beginning teachers when there is a lack of consistent communication. Even when both parties are taking a supportive stance, conflicting messages can be communicated, wasting precious time being redundant.

Currently a mentor, serving a beginning teacher, communication with the building principal would help me better support my beginning teacher to know and understand the goals and needs of their school. This communication would also provide another set of eyes and ears with which to reflect upon and provide effective feedback to the beginning teachers regarding their work.

Much of the research regarding the principal role in induction revolves around teacher retention and the need for building a trusting relationship between the principal and beginning teacher. By effectively communicating and collaborating with teachers, especially beginning teachers, the principal provides the best education possible to students. "Finding the time to do that should be a priority" (Brock & Grady, 2001, p. 50). This communication needs to be consistent and personal, as well as professional (Carver,

2003) allowing the trusting relationship to take precedence over the worry of confidentiality and fear of judgment and evaluation that often get in the way. Principals and mentors can and should work together to articulate their expectations to beginning teachers, develop a plan to support beginning teachers, work with beginning teachers to create and implement realistic goals, and model collaborative working behaviors (Hughes, 1994).

As a qualitative researcher, assumptions, perspectives, and beliefs are grounded in personal experiences. Qualitative research usually begins with a problem identified from practice (Merriam, 2002). My professional background reveals several unique educational roles all while serving the same school district over the past 20 years. I have had the opportunity to develop my perspectives from many roles within this district: short-term substitute, teacher of English as a Second Language, Title I teacher, classroom teacher, mentor teacher, teacher specialist, administrative intern, assistant principal, director of elementary education, and assistant superintendent. How have these experiences shaped my understandings and views of the principal's role regarding beginning teacher professional growth?

As a beginning teacher, I looked to my principal as the most important person in my work life. He was responsible for hiring me and could ultimately also be the one to end my career. In two teaching placements over seven years, my principals provided me with professional support and resources, as well as made personal connections and provided emotional support. In my first assignment, I had an informal, grade-level mentor assigned as my buddy teacher. She informally mentored me and supported me with finding curriculum resources and the day-to-day survival of the classroom. Looking

back now, I wonder what communication in regards to my classroom practices and me as a beginning teacher took place between my buddy teacher and principal. My principals were responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of my instructional practices, yet how much did they really know about what was happening in my classroom? At the same time, how much did I know about their enormous task of building leadership? Years and roles later, in working as a part of our Mentor Induction Implementation Team and Assistant Superintendent for Elementary education, I have had opportunities to see things from a different perspective. Although the role of my first building principal was unclear to me, I know now that when it comes to supporting teachers, the principal matters.

Ethical Considerations

In gathering data for a qualitative project, researchers seek an in-depth, description of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Some participants were asked to discuss personal details of their life experiences within a given time period. I recognize the questions posed in this research study may have caused participants to feel uncomfortable if they self-reported any negative information regarding their work environment, colleagues or program. Participants were informed verbally as well as within the written consent that pseudonyms will be used to maintain confidentiality. No participant declined to answer a particular question or asked that a response not be used within the study.

Participation was voluntary and no compensation was given. I wrote and sent notes of thanks to each participant after the interviews and will again at the conclusion of the study, as well as providing the study results to participants if requested.

Description of Next Chapter

Chapter IV includes the data findings obtained from the individual interviews of the participating triads. Participant responses are summarized in narrative form according to the five themes identified in the coding and analysis process.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this small-scale qualitative study was to better understand what effective principals do to support, develop, and assess their beginning teachers within the parameters of a comprehensive mentoring and induction program, as perceived by beginning teachers, mentors and principals. This study has the potential to guide improvement of induction programs, and to accelerate professional growth of beginning teachers by providing clarity of roles within the induction process for principals, mentors and beginning teachers.

Principal's perceptions regarding the impact of mentoring and induction on beginning teachers and school cultures were important, relevant, and timely for the purpose of this study. Principals' perceptions regarding mentoring and induction of beginning teachers may shape not only beginning teacher retention and success but also school cultures, invigorating veteran staff.

Description of the Oakdale Public School's District Mentoring and Induction Program

The district's new teacher induction program is state sponsored and enhanced by partnerships with SEEC, their regional education association, and The New Teacher Center. The majority of the mentors serving elementary beginning teachers also served in the role of performance coaches. These mentors were experienced teachers who received

extensive training to provide non-evaluative feedback and instructional coaching to accelerate beginning teacher professional growth. The induction program had specific criteria for goal setting, meeting times, observations, training, etc. Participating principals participated in the online state training and triad meetings, and they communicated expectations, school culture, etc. The documentation depicting induction program requirements are included in Appendix F.

Thematic Findings

This chapter presents a description of the themes which emerged from the participant interviews and review of documents as they related to the research questions driving this study. For this study, I gathered data through semi-structured individual interviews with four triads participating in a state run mentoring and induction program, regarding perceptions of the role of the principal in this process. It is important to point out that data collected from the interviews were not equal. As the purpose of this study is to further explore and define the role of the principal within the triad, more interviews, time and analysis was dedicated to principal perceptions. In order to understand the research and subsequent findings, I used grounded theory data analysis. This was a recursive process where I continually went back to the participant perception data to accurately capture their thoughts, ideas, concerns and accomplishments in the development of the findings. This section is organized by five broad themes that emerged from the analysis process: (a) healthy school cultures and trusting relationships influenced beginning teacher professional growth; (b) beginning teachers relied on their mentors to prepare them to be successful in the eyes of their principals; (c) the mentoring and induction program structure influenced beginning teacher's experience; (d)

supervision and evaluation promoted beginning teacher growth within the structured mentoring and induction program; and (e) all participants benefitted from the mentoring experience when communication occurred within the triad.

Theme 1: Healthy School Cultures and Trusting Relationships Influenced Beginning Teacher Professional Growth

The induction program documentation included goal statements, which included phrases such as: support teacher morale, communication, collegiality, trust and preventing teacher isolation. All beginning teacher participants reported feeling they were a part of a welcoming and inviting culture where more experienced teachers were helpful and caring. Jana, who had some struggle with her grade level Professional Learning Community (PLC) team stated, "I have lots of co-workers that are beyond helpful, and I feel really comfortable with a lot of the other teachers." Her mentor was able to support and guide her through the rough patch she had with her grade level team in the fall. Her mentor, Erika, was able to attend PLC meetings and provide feedback to Jana regarding her interpersonal interaction with her grade level colleagues. Erika felt the team was possibly intimidated by Jana's abilities and drive to ask the "difficult questions, and go above and beyond for the sake of her kids."

Beginning teacher Kari's principal felt she hit the ground running this fall, as she had served as a long-term substitute last year and knew the staff and was familiar with the building culture. Kari stated, "I just feel very comfortable here, and it's a good fit for me. I don't feel like there is any judgment, it's a very positive atmosphere and everybody is approachable."

Elementary schools are typically described as having healthy environments. The increased accountability and expectation put upon educators in the last decade has brought attention to student achievement. Researchers agree upon the importance of teacher quality and the teacher having the biggest effect on student achievement. Healthy school cultures and trusting relationships are the foundation of an environment in which beginning teachers can grow professionally. Experienced teachers provided feedback, support and guidance to beginning teachers. With the push for collaboration and teamwork to best meet the needs of students, it was important that grade level professional learning communities were aligned with the school culture and beliefs. Marty reported that, "Developing that trusting relationship, so that they [beginning teachers] can really move forward with the important work of the instruction and management."

This trusting relationship applied to beginning teachers and principals as well. When asked about the role her principal played in guiding her instruction, Emily replied, "I think he kind of needs to be my learning leader. I think that if I did not have a positive relationship with my principal I wouldn't be as good a teacher as I hope to be."

The importance of trust at all levels of the organization applied to the process of induction. The participants felt that trusting relationships were needed not only between mentor and beginning teacher but between mentor and principal as well. Principal Jennifer, reported,

> There has to be the strong relationship with the mentor. There has to be that
>
> trusting relationship that you can release them to go on to do the work that they
>
> need to with beginning teachers. I think that there has to be a strong message from

the principal, and to new teachers, letting them know that the only way to abuse this program is to not use it. They should embrace the process and most importantly trust the fact that the mentor is the person that you can go to because that is the way that they'll see the growth with it.

The core value of trust was a common term with all participants. Marty described the element of trust as being his first priority with new beginning teachers.

I strongly feel that if you build that trust and that support role, you are able to have two-way communication. By not only me going to them, but them coming to me about my expectations, and things that I'm looking for in their classrooms. When they receive [my] feedback, they should be able to come into my office and be open in discussing it.

Jack replied in a similar fashion, "First and foremost, mentors must build a trusting relationship with the mentee so that the mentee feels comfortable coming to them when they need to."

Despite the fact that there was not a question specifically asked regarding school culture, all four principals discussed the impact school cultures have on beginning teacher success. Jessica summarized this topic in saying:

It's definitely built on trust and respect. There are so many positive interactions that take place on a regular basis that the new teachers share with me; they feel great and fortunate to have that support.

Participants identified the need for involvement of both principals and teachers within the process of defining and creating healthy school cultures. Collaborative cultures supported and promoted teacher quality and professional growth. In an environment of

trust at all levels of the culture beginning teachers formed deep connections with their

mentors where successes and struggles were openly shared in efforts to improve practice.

Theme 2: Beginning Teachers Relied on their Mentors to Prepare them to be Successful in the Eyes of their Principals

Participants were asked to share their perspectives on the current evaluation

process in place for beginning teachers. Participant responses are organized by three sub-

themes which emerged from the data including: (a) mentors viewed as formative and

principals as summative; (b) goal oriented work; and (c) assessing beginning teacher

growth and effectiveness.

Mentors viewed as formative and principals as summative. Ongoing formative

assessments which were responsive to the needs of beginning teacher needs were a key

component of successful induction. A common term within mentoring and induction

when defining the role of mentors is non-evaluative. Principals described an ongoing

struggle when trying to balance providing feedback and coaching to beginning teachers

while also serving in the role of evaluator. When paired with formative feedback,

summative principal assessment was an important part of a balanced system of

assessment. Principals and mentors worked together to accelerate and promote beginning

teacher growth.

When asked to describe the difference and similarities of the work she

experienced with both her mentor and her principal, beginning teacher Jana said:

The principal's evaluation is the final copy of your project. The mentor is working

with you to be the best you can so when you have that observation you are [seen

as] an effective teacher.

Julie also related this to the supportive process we provide to students by stating, "My principal probably has more power and my mentor was more informal." Beginning teacher Emily expressed concern over wanting to know from her principal how she was doing. "I think that Richard might think that I was doing a great job but he did not hire me. You know Richard is not the reason I'm here, my principal is." This research supports findings that even when the beginning teacher has a strong, trusting relationship with their mentor, they desire to know their principal's expectations.

Goal-oriented work. All five beginning teachers reported feeling supported by both their mentors and principals in regards to meeting their professional goals. Jana stated, "I shared them [goals] with both; I shared them with Mr. Steen and went over the goals in our meetings for the formal evaluation. [Mentor] Stacy went through them with me throughout the mentoring program." Principal Bob discussed the value of communication in supporting beginning teacher goals. "I think the triad is very important as far as we're clear from the evaluation process to what I'll be looking for through the year to the goals of the mentee. I think collaboration and communication is the key." This illustrated the importance of collaboration, sharing of knowledge and resources to attain goals. This is vital for beginning teachers to experience early in their careers at many levels of the organizing.

Assessing beginning teacher growth and effectiveness. Principals reported finding value in formative assessments built into the induction process in improving the instruction and accelerating growth of beginning teachers. Mentor Erika reflected on the evaluation process for her beginning teachers.

When Jessica has come in to do an evaluation, teachers have always taken the positive out of them. We've met with both my mentees and looked at the evaluations and compared them to their goals and are able to plan next steps and decide how that will impact their instruction. Neither has ever come away with a negative response after an evaluation was done by Jessica. They always are very positive and wanting to know, if it's something they're unsure about. They might ask me for my support in that area and we usually go forward with another observation or we plan a lesson together or something like that. I've never had anything negative come out of an evaluation that Jessica has done. It usually grows instruction and student achievement more than anything.

This triad emulated the concept coaching for growth in beginning teachers. Principal Jessica clearly defined her expectations for instruction with beginning teachers early in the year. These expectations were the focus of the goal setting work for the mentor and beginning teacher. As Jessica observed teaching and provided both formative and summative feedback, the beginning teacher knew the expectations of the principal, was provided feedback aligned to their goals and had the support of their mentor to reflect on the feedback and modify instruction accordingly.

Theme 3: All Participants Benefitted From the Mentoring Experience when Communication Occurred Between the Triad

Study data suggested that beginning teachers, mentors, and administrators grew professionally when actively involved in the induction process. Mentors reflected on and refined their own practice, while working toward the common goal of improving the quality of education. Involved administrators offered on-going support, clarifying their

beliefs and expectations for all staff, including beginning teachers. The district also benefitted through increased quality and reflective practice of beginning teachers. Ultimately, the students are the ones who benefitted from effective communication and collaboration of induction participants.

These types of benefits were illustrated when principals were asked about the work of triad meetings. All four principals reported finding value. Jessica talked about the clarity it provided to all members regarding next steps for beginning teachers. "I think that is a huge help in keeping us on the same page and making sure that we are giving the person similar next steps." Bob also discussed the importance of the triad in clarifying expectations and progress towards professional growth goals.

> The triad is important to make sure you're all on the same page, because if I'm saying one thing, and the mentor is saying something different, the new teacher is the one that suffers.

Marty described the value of the triad meetings as working together to provide support for the beginning teacher.

> We hold triad meetings, where the mentors, the mentee, and I meet each trimester to talk about where are we at now, and what are the expectations we have of each other. We also talk about challenges that are happening right now with the mentee in the sense of what kind of support they need and we try to provide support.

Jessica identified the need for a trusting relationship among all parties to best promote beginning teacher professional growth and practice.

There has to be the strong relationship with the mentor. A trusting relationship that you can release them to go do the work they need to do with those beginning teachers and I think that there has to be a strong message from the principal, to those new teachers, letting them know that the only way to abuse this program is to not use it and not embrace the process. Most importantly, trust the fact that she [the mentor] is the person that you can go to, and just fully embrace that because that is the way that you'll see the growth.

Jack discussed his work with the mentor as impactful to instructional expectation for experienced as well as beginning teachers.

We work together to plan who needs what and who is best to provide the support. Teachers are getting feedback from me but they're also building that coaching relationship with Richard and I think it's that together part of what creates the change. If he was coaching but I was not reinforcing it there wouldn't be as much buy in [from the beginning teachers]. Because I'm talking about what I expect to see in instruction and he's able to support them in getting there faster.

The four mentors also reported finding value in the time and conversations within the triad meetings. Stacy found comfort in knowing she and her principal were coaching to a similar goal and not sending contradictory messages to the beginning teachers. "I think its trust and knowing that we're doing parallel things; that we're both working as coaches."

Erika discussed the importance of the trust her principal had in her to provide support to beginning teachers.

I just really appreciate that she will communicate sometimes through me to the first year teachers. If she sees a concern that she wants them to improve upon, she'll let me know, so that I can help support them. I think this has made them feel comfortable and as a result they're not afraid to go to her when they do have a concern or when they need support. This is because they know they can trust her. They may not be aware that she's supporting them through me. They feel very comfortable and I think that's a result of the way she's supported them.

Lori served as a mentor for the past three years in the same building but has worked with a different building principal each year. She described the importance of the principals' perceptions of and involvement in the induction process.

The first year I don't think the principal knew what to expect and we had the triad meeting at the beginning and we just kind of laid it out, you know like do you have any questions. In the first two years the principals were like whatever you want to do, we trust you, you know go for it. Now this third year Marty has been really hands-on, like these are the specific things I want. Maybe it's because he went to the principal trainings which I don't think they had before this year. So I don't know if that was why he was more prepared or if it's just him, but it's been nice to have that guidance knowing exactly what he expects. So, these are great meetings and I think in the end my mentee really benefited.

Stacy also found value in the concept of the triad meetings and was in agreement with Lori that the principal's personal interest, involvement and investment are what truly made them valuable.

It is helpful to both principal and teacher. Most new teachers grasp any advice

you can give and work hard to meet your expectations. As long as the principal is

giving valid and sincere advice in the process, teachers can benefit and grow. The

process is helpful to the principal as a guide to what kind of support the new

teacher needs and how well they are progressing.

When frequent, trusting communication occurred amongst the triad in efforts to support

and accelerate the practice of beginning teachers, supervision and evaluation became a

part of the daily routine and less of an intimidating event.

This research supports both formative and summative assessments as important

elements of teacher quality and professional growth. Ensuring these assessments are

responsive to beginning teacher development, aligned with professional teaching

standards and collaboratively administered was an essential component within the

comprehensive induction program.

Theme 4: Principals' Actions Regarding Supervision, Evaluation, and Feedback Impacted Beginning Teacher Growth

In responding to questions related to experiences about evaluation and assessment

of beginning teachers, participants discussed the impact of both the principal and mentor

within the induction program structure. Participant responses are organized by three sub-

themes including: (a) growth oriented teacher evaluation; (b) clear direction from

principal; and (c) working collaboratively to support beginning teacher growth.

Growth oriented teacher evaluation. Within the district's partnership with

NTC, the mentors utilized the research-based Formative Assessment and Support (FAS)

system, which is a set of tools and protocols utilized to advance beginning teacher

practice. The district has aligned these tools with Danielson's (1996) Framework for teaching, which is their adopted evaluation model. Both models are designed to provide feedback to teachers directly aligned to their professional goals in efforts to promote quality teaching. Additionally, district principals received information specific to teacher goal setting in the fall of 2012 at training for administrators facilitated by the district. Two of the four participating principals are utilizing the goal setting process designed for beginning teachers with all teachers at their school site.

Jessica discussed the importance of feedback and conversations about instruction to create reflective practitioners.

I think it is important when you see the teachers being able to take on reflective roles so my conversations with them can be more at a coaching level. Then with prompting questions [from me] they are able to identify some of those next steps on their own.

Marty shared strategies he used to support beginning teachers through both formal and informal evaluation.

Obviously we have to evaluate them two times per year, but I do more check-ins to be more of a support versus a threat to them because I want them to be successful. I hired them for a reason I believe in them. I try to convey to them that I want to be in a supportive role and see them succeed.

Clear direction from principal. The mentor participants in this study were asked about formal evaluation process and feedback provided by principals to beginning teachers. Mentor Stacy discussed the importance of knowing what the principal is

working on and expecting from the beginning teachers, so she could best support their work.

> I can support whatever it is but I need to know what the principal expects. If we have like one objective or student engagement as our goals, then I want to make sure when I'm in there hitting on those. That's going to be the common language in the building.

> It's having those meetings and being very transparent of what each of our roles is and that's kind of put out there by the North Dakota Group [TSS Mentor Program] saying you are going to have that triad meeting right? There has to be that support and there has to be that the principal giving the good, honest, valuable feedback. So that the work that I do as a mentor can be geared toward the learning of that new teacher and it can be as authentic as possible.

The beginning teacher participants in this study were asked to describe the evaluation process from their perspective. Overall, beginning teacher participants reported finding value in the evaluation process as they wanted to know what their principal expected of them and to what degree they were meeting these expectations.

> Those were very helpful because it was nice to know that we are on the same page. It was very refreshing to have him observe and then hear his feedback. It was like you got approval from your principal which to me was very important to know that I am doing the right thing.

> "I was just glad to have that meeting to discuss what was working and what he saw and the target and the objectives were nice to know." Additionally, beginning teachers reported the feedback provided by their principal helped them to grow

professionally. "I do think he is important because it is your first year teaching and he's the boss and you know you want to be doing well and you want your growth to be on track."

The beginning teachers had a good understanding of the evaluation process and reported having discussed their goals and progress throughout the year with both their mentors and principals.

> At the beginning of the year we wrote SMART goals and met with Jack to go over them. He also gave us a form that had the steps needed in order to achieve the goal and how you are going to go about it and how you know if you've gotten there. There was also a piece in there about what support you might need. Having the post observation conferences and having those discussions about what progress has been made was helpful.

Jana described the impact and importance of the relationship and communication with her principal.

> One thing I really like about him is he'll ask how's it going today and he likes to have this casual conversation which is nice sometimes. When I've had my formal observations, he's come in here, and would observe me and we talk about where you see your kids and all that. He has given me nice feedback and good points to be an effective teacher. And with our PD [professional development] or staff meetings, he's always there and I mean it's—yeah, he's helped me grow.

Working collaboratively to support beginning teacher growth. Participating principals reported finding value in being on the same page with mentors regarding beginning teachers' goals, current progress and supports needed.

I like to know what they're working on so if the mentor and I can both be on the same page as far as what we're focusing on with new teachers. I think that helps focus our efforts to provide the support as we both work with them. Also providing support for the mentor and the teacher [is important]. Maybe it's to go visit another classroom, or I can provide release time for the mentor to model lessons, but also I guess it's me stepping in sometimes maybe [to] support what that mentor is trying to do. Sometimes I'll go in there to work directly with the teacher.

In reflecting on what impact the induction program from their perspective, participating principals discussed the clarity and quality of beginning teachers' goals, as well as evaluations being less summative and more growth oriented. Principal Bob stated, "The communication between the teacher and administrator was clear as far as what we're looking for in the evaluation process. I do think it's summative but it ended up for some growth too, which was nice."

Marty shared that the mentoring and induction program worked well for him because it aligned with his own personal beliefs about supervision and evaluation.

I try to separate the two [supervision and evaluation] and I do feel there is a purpose for evaluation, especially if we're not doing our jobs. But otherwise, I see it as professional growth and try to have discussions with staff and provide feedback for them to improve in their job. When I'm meeting with them, I'm asking them, 'What do you want me to look for?' So it goes with some personal beliefs of mine as well.

Jessica credited the program as helping her to build a culture of reflective teaching and coaching.

> The idea that you can get where you want to be faster and more efficiently with support and being able to have someone lead you and someone to coach you along. I think that the coaching philosophy what we're trying to instill in the rest [of the staff]. That coaching is about helping you meet your goals and is that mirror to help you see where you're at and to help you get there faster. That part of the mentor program is what we're trying to take to the rest of the staff.

Participating principals found that providing the right balance of feedback and support in a consistent manner can be challenging when shared amongst key leaders within induction. Data supports the benefits of these efforts as resulting in beginning teachers with clear goals and expectations along with the supports in place to be successful.

Theme 5: The Mentoring and Induction Program Structure Influenced Beginning Teacher's Experience

Similar to the concept of educating the whole child, comprehensive induction programs also support beginning teachers' social and emotional well-being. Principals and mentors were asked to reflect on the work of the induction program and to discuss possible impacts or results they have experienced at their school sites.

Jessica viewed the support of the induction process as being vital for beginning teachers' successful transition into their teaching career.

> I think that the confidence the new teachers can have in their own professional goals is just so much better [than in the past]. In most cases the environment that

they're able to create in their classroom because they have support, that extra set of reflective eyes to help them problem solve, makes it a very smooth transition.

Jack discussed finding value in the core program requirements and their alignment with both district and building philosophy.

Well, definitely that there's consistency, that they really are meeting those requirements that are a part of the mentor program. I think we go above and beyond those but we definitely want those minimum requirements in place. I expect the things they work on are the things that support where we're going as a building and support the district philosophy. And that they do so in a way that keeps things manageable for the new teachers.

Beginning teachers identified their appreciation for having an assigned mentor with whom they could share, ask questions of, etc. without feeling guilty. "I feel like I go to Erika for more questions just because she has been assigned to me as a part of her job and then I don't have to bother Jessica with the little things." Beginning teacher Mike stated, "I kind of just go to Erika for pretty much everything and I guess that's the way it's supposed to work."

Erika stated the importance of her principal understanding and supporting the induction program requirements.

She definitely protects my meeting times with both of my first year teachers. I meet at a scheduled time and she knows that and protects that time. She supports time away from the school when I go to the mentor forums and when I've gone to my trainings.

Mentor Richard discussed the lines of communication defined within program and how it played out within the work of the triad.

> I share with Jack about some of the celebrations and good things that I've seen. But I don't get into the specifics, saying this particular teacher is really struggling with classroom management or instruction. If I do bring up things like that, I keep it anonymous and then we'll kind of talk and brainstorm about ways that we can go about filling that need.

The documentation provided by TSS Mentor Program in collaboration with the district provided a comprehensive framework for the work to be accomplished by all members of the induction process. These included timelines, tools and protocols which are shared and discussed at various induction program trainings. The participants reported following these guidelines and, as illustrated by the data, the structure impacted the work of beginning teachers.

Emergent Theory

Emergent theory from this research reflects the importance of the individual principal's actions and beliefs related to their role and responsibility as the building leader in the mentoring and induction triad. Individual principal's beliefs, dispositions, and actions set the tone for the work of the mentoring and induction program at their school site. The absence of systematic and consistent principal interaction limits opportunities for consistent feedback, and the development of trusting relationships and professional growth for all teachers. This theory supports a triad with role definition for principals, as well as mentors in their work with beginning teachers. The clarification regarding the work of the principal in mentoring and induction has the potential to be

recognized by induction leaders at a local, state, and national level and serve as a resource to clarify the critical role and importance of the principal in teacher development, effectiveness, and beginning teacher induction.

Grounded Theory

Selective Coding

Although these themes effectively summarized the data, I used selective coding for further analysis of the data as well as my thinking about the process. I utilized selective coding, the process of choosing one category as the core category of the study which describes the interrelationship of all other categories. This recursive coding process revealed a core category or phenomenon, which was how individual principals' beliefs, dispositions and actions set the tone for the work of the mentoring and induction program at their school site. Oakdale's Induction Program provides expectations and a structure for the triad meetings, as well as guidance for principals regarding their role in supporting the program. However, as demonstrated by the data, impact of the induction program can vary depending on the beliefs, actions, and leadership style of the individual principal.

To best illustrate the interrelationship of causal conditions (factors that influence the core category), contextual and intervening conditions (specific and general factors that influence strategies), and outcomes from using the strategies, I developed a grounded theory framework (see Figure 5). Creswell (2007) described this as a theory developed and articulated by the researcher toward the end of the study which "can assume several forms, such as a narrative statement, a visual picture, or a series of hypothesis or

90

propositions" (p. 65). This theoretical model is a system of ideas that help explain the

importance of the role of the principal in mentoring and induction.

Contextual Conditions

District level training sites
Beginning teachers' classrooms
Beginning teacher's schools
Colleagues' classrooms within the district
Building culture and climate, impacted by staff relationships

Causal Conditions

District's response to not making Adequate Yearly Progress

Continuous demands on beginning teachers to meet the needs of all students

District's partnership with state-led induction program

Core Category

(Central Phenomenon)

Principals set the tone for the work of the mentoring and induction program.

Strategies

Triad Meetings

Observations and Feedback

Knowledge and implementation of formal and informal assessments

Support from Principal
       Direct or Indirect

Deliberate Culture of Support and Professional Growth

Reflective Teaching and Coaching

Consequences

Principals, who oversee the implementation of the mentoring and induction program, along with providing direct support, open communication, create cultures of feedback and professional growth for all teachers.

Intervening Conditions

Leadership Style
Principal Experiences and Beliefs
Hiring Practices
Site-Based Mentor, also Serving as Instructional Coach
District's Work with NTC and SEEC to go Above State Requirements
Alignment of District Evaluation and Induction Program
Formative Assessment Tools

Figure 5. Grounded Theory Model.

Causal Conditions

A causal condition is what influences the core category of the study. Oakdale

Public School District has not made Adequate Yearly Progress for the past several years.

Knowing teachers matter more to student achievement than any other aspect of

schooling, it is imperative that quality teachers operate in every classroom providing

effective and innovative instructional teaching practices. Oakdale Public School's New

Teacher Induction Program goals include: (a) improve and accelerate the effectiveness of

new teachers; (b) build capacity by creating autonomous self-reflective teachers; (c)

ensure increased student engagement and academic achievement; (d) provide coaching

support to ALL teachers new to the Oakdale Public Schools; and (e) nurture a culture of

imbedding professional development and an expectation that all teachers grow.

An additional causal condition is the continuous demands on beginning teachers

to meet the needs of all students. The state of North Dakota is experiencing a rapidly

increasing population throughout the state. Along with students of different and often

unique backgrounds and experiences, many students are mobile or transient and may

transfer between schools within the district or move back and forth from district to

district. Teachers are challenged by developing relationships with students, assessing

their current academic level, and determining social, emotional and academic needs. This

is a daunting task to take on in isolation; collaboration with a more experienced teacher, a

mentor is a support put in place by the district in response to the changing student

demographics.

The final overarching causal condition is the school district's partnership with the

state-led induction program. Oakdale meets the core requirements of TSS Mentor

Program, going above and beyond by utilizing NTC for mentor training and SEEC's Beginning Teacher Network. This explicit framework is impactful to the induction practices occurring within the district.

Contextual Conditions

Five contextual conditions impacted the selected strategies and ultimately the consequences of the study: (a) district level training sites; (b) beginning teachers' classrooms; (c) beginning teachers' schools; (d) colleagues' classrooms within the district; and (e) building culture and climate, impacted by staff relationships.

All participating beginning teachers and mentors reported viewing their school site cultures as supportive and helpful. Additionally, the induction program held professional learning opportunities in various locations within the district. An induction program requirement supported beginning teachers, accompanied by their mentors, to observe 12 hours in an experienced teacher's classroom within the district.

Intervening Conditions

Intervening conditions, which influenced the strategies resulting from the core category that principals set the tone for the work of the mentoring and induction program. These conditions varied between participating principals and included: (a) leadership style of the principal; (b) principal experiences and beliefs; (c) hiring practices; (d) site-based mentor also serving as instruction coach; (e) district's work with NTC and SEEC to go above and state requirements; (f) alignment of district evaluation and induction program formative assessment tools; and (g) frequent, trusting communication.

Strategies

The strategies which were impacted by the intervening and contextual conditions as well as the core category were (a) triad meetings; (b) observations and feedback; (c) knowledge and use of formal and informal feedback; (d) support provided by principals as either direct or indirect; (e) cultures of support and professional growth, and (f) reflective teaching and coaching.

Although the New Teacher Induction Program provided a framework for principals' work, participating principals varied in their strategies and levels of implementation. Some principals involved the mentor in supporting the beginning teacher with the process of goal setting as well as preparing for and reacting to the feedback from formal evaluations. This is in addition to the program requirements of two formal observations with non-evaluative feedback provided by the mentor. Support from the principal to beginning teachers varied in the amount as well as type of support.

Consequences

The causal conditions leading to the core category, the strategies resulting from the context and intervening conditions that impacted the strategies culminated in the following consequence: Principals, who oversee the implementation of the mentoring and induction program, along with providing direct support, open communication, create cultures of feedback and professional growth for all teachers.

Description of the Next Chapter

Chapter V includes a discussion and summary of findings followed by conclusions, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research. The findings are summarized according to the research questions of the study. The chapter concludes with recommendations for induction leaders at the local, regional and national level.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions and Summary of Findings

The findings of this small-scale qualitative study of four elementary principals in a single Midwestern rural district suggest the following:

1. Principals' attention to and involvement with beginning teachers strongly influenced their prior knowledge, skills and past experiences.

2. The presence of well-trained mentors prompted, motivated and supported principals' work with beginning teachers in significant ways.

3. Mentoring provided a passageway to the essence of instructional leadership for principals.

4. Teacher evaluation was a learning opportunity for beginning teachers.

5. Trust and confidentiality within the triad promoted beginning teacher growth.

The following research questions developed from the purpose statement addressed in the data analysis include:

1. How do the beliefs and actions of elementary principals regarding leadership, induction, and teacher evaluation influence beginning teacher experiences within the context of a mentoring and induction program?

2. How do principals support, develop and assess beginning teachers?

3. How do beginning teachers experience interactions with principals? How do these interactions appear to influence beginning teachers' professional growth?

4. How do mentors experience interactions with principals? How do these interactions appear to influence beginning teachers' professional growth?

These findings are summarized in narrative form according to the research questions.

Research Question 1

How do the backgrounds, beliefs and actions of elementary principals regarding leadership, induction, and teacher evaluation influence beginning teacher experiences within the context of a statewide induction program?

It is the role of the principal to support, supervise, and evaluate beginning teachers. Saphier et al. (2001) suggested the skills, knowledge, and beliefs that principals bring to the role can be vital to the success and professional growth of beginning teachers. The four principals in this study had similar educational backgrounds which led them to the principalship, yet their beliefs and actions differed in subtle ways. These four principals first and foremost sought to be classroom teachers. Early in their teaching careers colleagues, supervisors, and others in their work life pointed out these beginning teachers' leadership capacities. All four principals, within the first ten years of their teaching careers first sought their master's degrees and within the following five years obtained their principal credentials. Past experiences and training opportunities in teaching, mentoring, coaching and administration influenced principals' work. All four principals viewed themselves as strong instructional leaders. Jack served in the largest

building in the district, and as his student population grew and became more diverse, he reported spending more time in the role of a school manager. He discussed an upcoming opportunity being offered locally called *The Break Through Coach,* designed to support building principals in multiplying the time spent serving as an instructional leader in classrooms. This is something Jack sought out on his own showing the value he placed on this role.

Bob had been an athletic coach at many levels since leaving high school. He shared the impact of this in developing his instructional leadership philosophy, as well as in providing informal feedback to teachers. These informal coaching notes with the header stating "Every Champion Needs a Coach" provide descriptive feedback regarding instructional practice. Of additional interest, Jessica had been assigned a leadership coach to assist her through the first two years of being a principal; not one of the four experienced mentoring as a beginning teacher.

Furthermore, each of the participating principals made a gradual transition from teaching into administration, encouraged by former colleagues and driven by a desire to impact change on a larger scale. Bob spent several years as a lead teacher in his building while Marty spent several summers as the summer school principal. As a beginning teacher, Jack remembered his first principal as having a negative impact on staff and students. This experience began Jack's journey to leadership, causing Jack to consider the positive impact he could create as a leader. Interestingly, Marty served as Jessica's principal for three years and was vital in helping Jessica identify her leadership potential.

Beliefs and actions. Although each triad was distinct from the other, collectively they represented a systemic approach to beginning teacher support. All four triads were

functioning within the context of a well-defined induction system and in a broad scope were more similar than different. A variable which emerged within the research process was the level of comfort principals had in their own instructional knowledge, as well as their beliefs that instructional leadership included them directly providing instructional feedback to teachers. Two principals in this study, Jack and Bob, offered more indirect support of their beginning teachers. They appeared less confident in their own abilities in classroom instruction after having left the classroom several years ago and knowing new instructional materials and strategies had been introduced during that time period. The beginning teachers who worked with Bob and Jack reported feeling satisfied with their principal's level of involvement and support within the induction process.

  Stronge, Richard, and Catano (2008) suggested principals, regardless of instructional comfort, as being able to "contribute importantly to these communities when they promote teacher reflection and professional growth" (p. 58). The presence of well-trained mentors prompted, motivated, and supported principals' work with beginning teachers in significant ways. The participating principals had professional development opportunities available to become familiar with the induction program. Principals who understand the purpose and work of the induction program are "able to work more effectively with those who are also providing support to ensure new teacher success" (Stronge et al., 2008, p. 50). This research provides evidence that instructional leadership can be provided through the shared leadership of the principal and experienced teachers. When a relationship built on clear roles and trust exists between the principal and mentor, the mentor can provide "helpful, nonjudgmental assistance in reflecting on and sharpening professional practice" (Barth & Guest, 1990, p. 68). Mentors Erika and Lori

reported having a trusting and open relationship with their principals who modeled desire to learn along with teachers and did not claim to be the experts in instruction.

Principals Marty and Jessica exhibited directive leadership styles in supporting both mentors and beginning teachers at their sites. Teachers and mentors regarded both of these principals as instructional leaders who co-planned, co-taught, and modeled lessons and provided clear and explicit feedback regarding instruction. Mentor Erika discussed her perceptions of Principal Jessica's background experiences impacted her work as an instructional leader.

Because she's been a mentor before, I think she understands how important it is and that she sees the value in it. She sees how quickly first year teachers grow with instruction and their classroom management because she's done it before.

These principals had strong instructional backgrounds and focused on the learning in classrooms. This was illustrated by Marty's actions as shared by Mentor Lori. "I think he needs to be my learning leader. I think that if I did not have a positive relationship with my principal I wouldn't be as good a teacher as I hope to be." The participating mentors and beginning teachers viewed these principals as the building's leader of learning, committed to ongoing professional growth.

In all four cases, the induction program created a pathway to instructional leadership. Brock and Grady (2001) suggested the vision of exemplary principals is "communicated and modeled through their behavior" (p. 43). Principals must share and clearly communicate their vision so that it becomes shared by those who can make it a reality. Beginning Teacher Jenna reflected on her experiences and perceptions of Principal Marty:

He started the year with the approach, 'kids first' and that really struck me and just got me very motivated to start the year and I've kind of kept that same mentality throughout the whole year 'kids first.' And he's the one that reminds us of that as well and does everything in the best interest of the kids, so that makes it very easy to work with him.

In response to the question, "What is the most important part of your job?" Principal Marty replied, "For me the most important part is that instructional leader piece and making sure that students are learning." This illustrated a principal's vision that is evident in words as well as actions.

When Principal Jessica was asked to describe what she believed the role of the principal to be, she stated, "I really think it's my role to support and encourage teachers and to provide the resources that they need to deliver best practice instruction and create strong relationships with students." Hughes (1990) described effective principals as being able to link their actions, even on matters that are seemingly remote from instruction, to the goal of improving teaching and learning" (p. 157). Mentor Erika shared an example of her principal exemplifying this by sharing the following:

She has done a really good job with her first year teachers of recognizing needs and coming to me as the mentor to help support those needs so that it is more of a mutual partnership where we can work through something together, rather than her as the administrator saying this needs to be fixed, here is how you can do it.

These two principals' beliefs and actions showed evidence of their understanding as well as support of the induction program. Bartell (2005) viewed this type of work by the principal as effective in providing support to ensure beginning teacher success. Chako

(2009) stated that many new principals have "come up through the chairs" of beginning teacher, mentor, and district coordinator (p. 1). Often these principals created climates of teacher inquiry and teacher collaboration as standard practice. Interestingly, both Marty and Jessica were groomed for leadership by the district, beginning as classroom teachers and serving as instructional coaches and mentors prior to taking on their first administrative positions. Principals had the unique opportunity to express values by modeling for and acting upon their beliefs, sending a powerful message especially to beginning teachers, who paid close attention to the principal's behavior. When principals clearly communicated their belief systems to both mentors and beginning teachers it provided focus for the work of beginning teachers. This translated into ongoing, authentic feedback within the evaluation process.

Research Question 2

How do principals support, develop and assess beginning teachers?

The participating beginning teachers all reported having positive relationships with their principals. Jenna said, "He is very personable, so we have open communication and he's very easy to talk to and to approach." Emily described how comfortable Jack made her feel early in the school year. *"The beginning of the year I was in his office for any questions that I had and I felt really comfortable going in there and things were great. He's very approachable when it comes to speaking with him about anything."* "Successful principals provide emotional support for teachers and are viewed as possessing the ability to foster positive inter-personal relationships" (Stronge et al., 2008, p. 5). The beginning teachers' comments reveal how essential it is for the principal to establish frequent and open communications.

The concern of balancing the amount of support versus assessment was shared by all participating principals. However, alignment of the district's formal evaluation and the formative assessment tools of induction program provided a structure to support beginning teachers in developing and strengthening their practice. When this alignment occurs, Watkins (2011) stated "a message that induction is an important part of a district's mission" is sent to all stakeholders. The Danielson Framework and professional teaching standards is a focus in the initial professional learning opportunities for beginning teachers. Additionally, mentors assisted beginning teachers in selecting a domain of the framework from which to formulate their professional goals.

Even when schools utilized mentors, principals played a significant role in supporting beginning teacher's development. Carver (2003) described the work of effective principals as providing formative feedback from classroom observations, clearly expressing performance expectations, and helping beginning teachers set reasonable goals. "Too often principals operate on the assumption that a new teacher will learn best from experience or that their mentor will explain directly what the novice needs to know" (Hughes, 2009, p. 205). Beginning teacher Jenna reported her appreciation of hearing formative feedback directly from her principal.

> Those were very helpful because it was nice to know that we are on the same page, and it was very refreshing to have him observe and then hear his feedback. Because it was like you got approval and so that to me was very important to know that I am doing the right thing.

> When asked what they looked for as evidence of growth during the evaluation process participating principals identified some form of a growth model; knowing where

they were from beginning of the year, and a check-in again at mid-year and again at the end of the year. The four principal participants approached teacher evaluation as a learning opportunity for beginning teachers.

During the summative evaluation process, the principals communicated their expectations to the beginning teacher and focused their observations around the beginning teacher's individual needs. As one principal remarked, the process of conducting beginning teacher evaluations, including communication with the beginning teacher's mentor, helped her to focus on the beginning teacher's goals. "I think that the evaluation process helps us [principal and mentor] to help beginning teacher to meet their goals and just is kind of that mirror to help them see where they're at and to help them get there faster." Carver (2003) described the work of effective principals regarding the coordination of evaluation activities within induction and mentoring programs as one of preventing "unnecessary overlap or conflicting expectations" (p. 38). Carver and Feiman-Nemser (2008) found the benefit of principals taking the initiative in communicating how beginning teachers are expected to learn and grow provides principals with the opportunity to influence how teachers learn to think reflectively about their teaching practice. Principal Bob shared the importance of the triad meeting to clarifying goals and expectations. "I think that the triad is very important as far as being clear on the evaluation process to what I'll be looking for in the goals of the mentee."

The participating principals stated they empowered the beginning teachers to decide whether or not to include their mentors in the formal evaluation process. The five beginning teachers reported sharing the evaluation results with their mentors but they differed in the way they were shared. Mentor Erika was present at the post-observation

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conference alongside the beginning teacher. Principal Jessica and beginning teacher Kari consistently reported her role was to be another set of ears for the beginning teacher and other than describing her current work with Kari, she remained silent within the post-conference. Beginning Teacher Jana brought a hard copy of her evaluations to her one-on-one meetings with Stacy that followed her post-observation with Principal Bob. Mentor Stacy said they were able to look at Bob's feedback in light of Jana's goals and make a plan for them moving forward in their work.

Ultimately, beginning teachers wanted principals to communicate their criteria for quality teaching. They also desired principals to visit their classrooms to provide affirmation, encouragement as well as opportunities for growth. The participating principals, with the support of a comprehensive induction program, which intentionally included the principal, had the knowledge and resources to successfully support, develop and assess beginning teachers.

Research Question 3

How do beginning teachers experience interactions with principals? How do these interactions appear to influence beginning teachers' professional growth?

The positional power which accompanies the title of principal can be one of power and intimidation or that of growth and professionalism. Brock and Grady (2001) suggested the "relationship between the teacher and principal is of major importance in a teacher's work life. For beginning teachers, the climate created by the principal will be a factor in their success or failure" (p. 41). Beginning teacher Jenna described the perceived power that beginning teachers assigned to principals. "He's very supportive, — like he's still intimidating just because he has that principal role you know but I'm not

afraid to ask him or tell him our problems or if I have something with a student, he is very understanding."

Within the study triads, there were two approaches to instructional leadership with regards to beginning teacher support. Principals Jack and Bob described their practice in what can be characterized as indirect or hands-off support. Their discussions contained more references to creating conditions and expectations to be carried out with the support of mentors or through collaborative work of teachers. Jack, in particular, discussed his efforts to create enabling support structures for the work of beginning teachers with their mentors. Neither reported working closely with teachers to plan or deliver instruction. On the other hand, both Jessica and Marty took a distinctly different approach. They not only demonstrated willingness but an eagerness to do the work of instructional leadership. Both shared instances where they worked with teachers to co-teach, plan or even model. In contrast, Bob and Jack were more inclined to create the right set of conditions, and then "get out of the way" so that the mentors could do the work.

Arguably, both approaches to beginning teacher support could be considered effective, given the right conditions, circumstances, guidelines, and expectations. However, the five beginning teachers interviewed for this study all reported they appreciated the feedback and support from their mentors, but ultimately wanted to know that the feedback from their mentor was aligned with and support them in meeting the expectations of their principal. At Jack's site, beginning teacher Emily ended up having her contract non-renewed for this school year. Richard, her mentor, reported her instructional strengths including assessment methodology and understanding of teaching to the standards. Jack on the other hand, being more hands-off needed to step in on a few

occasions due to classroom management as well as parent concerns related to the demographics of her classroom. In the end, Jack focused more on the work Emily had created for him versus her abilities to meet student academic needs. When Jack was asked what his expectations were for mentor's work with beginning teachers as well as mentors work with him as the principal he stated:

> I really don't have any expectations of the mentor here. I trust the mentors are more trained in the area of providing these new teachers support than I am a so I get out of their way so I don't murk up the waters. My only expectation would be that if a mentee is flailing or in crisis the mentor let me know what kind of support is needed.

> Saphier et al. (2001) described the mentors-beginning teacher relationship within a comprehensive induction program to be non-judgmental and non-evaluative. "Further, the mentor does not play a role in the evaluation of the beginning teacher and does not participate in decision making on the future employment of the new teacher" (p. 81). Is this a case of a triad who explicitly followed the guidelines of the program and the principal and mentor were both aware of concerns with the beginning teacher yet no action was taken? Or did Jack's indirect leadership style prohibit the concerns from being addressed? What support may have helped Emily to be successful at the start of her career?

Principals must understand that the mentor should not be expected to be a source of information on the performance of the beginning teacher. Their evaluations of new teachers must be based on their own first-hand knowledge of the new teacher's performance. All four principals reported taking into account the information shared with

them by the mentors regarding the beginning teachers' performance in addition to their own informal observations. If a concern or area of focus arose, the participating principals all reported making a plan of support with the mentor's involvement. The literature on beginning teachers acknowledges beginning teachers' unique need for assistance. Yet no special role is assigned to the principal in meeting their needs. "Instead, it promotes the use of mentors" (Brock & Grady, 2001, p. 41). This situation described above leads to more questions than answers for me as an observer respecting the confidentiality of the triad. However, my observations and experiences of scenarios such as these are what prompted this topic of research.

The following story, shared by Jessica, illustrates the value of hands-on, interactive, instructional leadership, especially when paired with open communication between the principal and mentor. Beginning teacher Kari started her year off very strongly in the view of both her principal and mentor. Her strengths included classroom management, sound understanding of the standards and assessment practices as well as building effective relationships with students. However, Jessica heard concerns from Kari's grade level teaching partners about her inability to work well in their PLC. They perceived her as brash, close-minded, and strong-willed. Principal Jessica, having observed Kari's strengths in the classroom, intentionally provided informal feedback to Kari, labeling instructional behaviors to her in the likelihood of her becoming consciously competent and solid in her teaching strategies. At the same time, Jessica had assigned different teacher specialists to sit in on grade level meeting times to support their work. Jessica intentionally had Kari's mentor as well as a district level instructional coach assigned to the Kindergarten team. Both coaches were told in confidence of the

strained relationships and were asked to mediate conversations and utilize the language of support they had both been trained on through the district. Beginning teacher Kari was not made aware of this arrangement; however, she reported to me that her mentor attends her grade level PLC meetings and she stated this made her feel more comfortable and safe. This school year, Jessica has moved Kari to the first grade level. This was done purposefully due to Jessica's knowledge of Kari's high student expectations as well as classroom management techniques. The grade level teachers currently teaching first grade have not agreed with the level of rigor expected by the new Common Core State Standards, and Jessica felt Kari could push them in their thinking by sharing her student data and strategies. As a second year teacher, Kari has the support of Erika as her mentor, to continue to work with her on adult-to-adult relationships as well as providing other support. The decision to mentor second year teachers is not supported by the TSS Mentor Program but is a commitment of the district which will be discussed later in this chapter. As exemplified in Jessica's story above, not everything principals do is visible, and often these invisible decisions make a big impact. The interactions of individual principals within the parameters of a comprehensive mentoring and induction program impacted beginning teacher professional growth.

Research Question 4

How do mentors experience interactions with principals? How do these interactions appear to influence beginning teachers' professional growth?

Confidentiality is a term widely used in mentoring and induction literature. It is both a sensitive and important topic for the work of the triad. "Mentors and principals must learn to work together as co-leaders for teacher learning without breaching

confidentiality (Lieberman et al., 2012, p. 30). Mentors should not be put in the role of evaluator or be expected to report to principals how things are going with the beginning teacher.

In the pilot study, at the onset of the program's implementation, this term was used by participants. The pilot site was in the same district as the current study and took place in the spring of the first year of the New Teacher Induction Program implementation. Two years later, the term confidentiality was still prevalent in interview transcripts, yet the purpose of the term appeared to have changed. Participating mentors, within the pilot study, communicated very little with their principal outside of the requirements of the program. This principal too, when questioned was hesitant and appeared unclear regarding her role, if any, in mentoring and induction. She wanted to support her beginning teachers and she reported appreciation for the induction program, but there was a feeling of hesitancy in her actions and disconnect between her work and that of the mentor in supporting beginning teachers.

Within the current study, in the same district nearly three years into the implementation, the term confidentiality took on a feel for protecting the beginning teacher while working as a team to support practice and accelerate growth. Stronge et al. (2008) described the concept of shared leadership noting that principals do not have to lead alone in their schools. "Guiding a school staff to reach a common vision requires intensive and sustained collaboration. After all, it is the expertise of teachers upon which any quality educational system is built" (p. 6). A common, yet vital criterion for selecting mentors was that of expert teacher. This along with clearly defined roles for supporting beginning teachers and working alongside principals diminished the concern of breaching

confidentiality. With an identified mentor to work alongside, shared leadership became a reality for principals. Mentor Erika described the beneficial interactions of shared leadership with her principal:

> I just really appreciate that she will communicate sometimes through me to the first year teachers if she sees a concern. It's not me going to her with concerns so we still have the correct avenues for communication going as far as the trust component. But if there is something she wants them to improve upon, she'll let me know, so that I can help support them. Which I think has made them feel the most comfortable and as a result they're not afraid to go to her when they do have a concern or when they do need support from her because they know that they can trust her.

When trusting relationships were intentionally formed, confidentiality moved away from the concept of secrecy to that of having respectful conversations focused on full support of beginning teachers' professional growth. Darling-Hammond (2003) shared the importance of principals becoming aware of their own mentoring abilities as well as weaknesses. By identifying their own mentoring skills, principals were involved not only as learners but also as participants in induction and be more prepared to interact and collaborate with mentors.

Emerging Theory on the Principal's Role in Mentoring and Induction

Based on my review of related literature and experiences and observations, I had some initial hunches about my topic and used those to construct my set of exploratory research questions. Merriam (2002) described these hunches as "tentative working hypotheses" which are reformulated throughout the research process (p. 13). The

frameworks developed by both Barkley and Bianco (2011) and Watkins (2005) portrayed the triad relationship I was interested in researching. What principals should know and be able to do is not commonly agreed on by those in the field. As a result, agreement regarding the role and involvement of principals in the mentoring process can differ depending on the context in which they work (Barkley & Bianco, 2011). My beliefs strongly align, yet developed in new directions, with Watkins and Barkley and Bianco as they seek to identify the contextual and intervening conditions including individual principal dispositions which influence leadership style that ultimately impact the work and effectiveness of the triad.

PRINCIPAL

- Active Engagement in Induction
- Overseer of Mentoring Program
- Clear Understanding of the Evaluation Process
- Expectations Clearly Stated for Quality Teaching
- Collaboration with Mentors
- Deliberate Hiring Practices
- Leadership Style
- Model Actions and Beliefs

Individual principals' beliefs, dispositions and actions set the tone for the work of the mentoring and induction program at their school site. The absence of systematic and consistent principal interaction limits opportunities for consistent feedback, the development of trusting relationships and professional growth for all teachers.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Systematic Approach

Frequent, Trusting Communication

Comprehensive Induction Program

Alignment of Induction Program and District Evaluation

Balanced Assessment System

CAUTION

Beginning Teacher Professional Growth

PROGRAM IMPACT

Healthy School Cultures

Social and Emotional Well-Being of Beginning Teachers

Reflective Practitioners

Climate of Feedback and Reflection

Mentor

Beginning Teacher

Figure 6. Triad Support.

Across the nation, induction programs have been mandated by state departments in efforts to raise retention rates of beginning teachers. Research clearly shows that the quality of the teacher in the classroom has a great effect on student achievement. The Teacher Support System took the stance that in order to become as effective as possible, all first-year teachers deserved the support of their principal and colleagues and, in addition, a trained mentor. The participating district has also added to this a goal of creating a culture of coaching and feedback. Through the research process, I discovered

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many other causal, contextual and intervening conditions, along with the core category of the individual principal's beliefs, actions and dispositions which impact the strategies, ultimately resulting in consequences, either impactful or not, of the work of the triad.

The concept of the triad as a strategy for induction has been referred to and supported in the literature as a context in which principals, mentors and beginning teachers identify objectives with all three members having input and are working toward a common goal of beginning teacher professional growth (Brock & Grady, 1997; Heffner, 2009; Watkins, 2011). The practices learned in induction serve as resources for teachers to utilize throughout their careers. Comprehensive induction programs which deliberately include the principal support beginning teachers not just survive, but to succeed and thrive (Lieberman, Hanson, & Gless, 2012). Many induction programs focus solely on retention and miss the opportunity to raise the bar for beginning teachers. The knowledge and expertise needed to successfully meet the needs of students today require reflective, rich, teaching practice which are most effectively fostered and developed in close collaboration with colleagues (Bartell, 2005).

The development of a grounded theory model helped to define possible avenues of communication to support the work of the triad. The central idea that emerged from this analysis was how individual principal's beliefs, dispositions and actions set the tone for the work of the mentoring and induction program at their school site. After examining the interrelations of the codes, categories and themes within the grounded theory model, it became evident there was an assertion or claim for emergent theory. This assertion conveyed in the illustration above (see Figure 6) is that individual principal's beliefs, dispositions and actions set the tone for the work of the mentoring and induction program

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at their school site. The absence of systematic and consistent principal interaction limits opportunities for consistent feedback, the development of trusting relationships and professional growth for all teachers.

Limitations of the Study

The research shows the positive influence principals have on the retention of beginning teachers. The participating principals claimed to be actively involved in the induction process of their beginning teachers and yet, the purpose of this study was not to follow these beginning teachers into the next school year and measure the rate of retention.

Limitations to the study include the settings and size of the study and race/ethnicity of participants. Research was conducted in four settings, four suburban elementary schools. It would be of interest to include urban and/or rural settings as well. Due to my own personal and professional time constraints, the study was limited to four triads whereas a larger number of triads may have provided additional insights not revealed in this study. Although the sample size is too small for generalizing to larger populations, there is still much we can learn about the nature of this work from the thinking of four principals who take the task of beginning teacher support seriously. Attempts were made to secure a diverse ethnic/racial sample; however, due to the voluntary nature of participation, it was not possible.

Overall, I perceived participants responding in a positive manner throughout the interview process. Conceivably participants may have attempted to state the answer that they felt I was seeking in order to please me. This could be true of all participants, as

principals may want to be viewed as actively involved and mentors and beginning

teachers want to speak well of their principal.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Further Study

The purpose of this small-scale qualitative study was to better understand what

effective principals do to support, develop, and assess their beginning teachers within the

parameters of a comprehensive mentoring and induction program, as perceived by

beginning teachers, mentors and principals. Merriam (2002) described an inductive study

occurring when the researcher discovers new relationships and concepts "rather than

verification of predetermined hypotheses" (p. 13). During the research process, four areas

were identified for further investigation: (a) partnership agreements; (b) year two support;

(c) principal training; and (d) instructional coaches as mentors.

Recommendations for the Design and Implementation of Induction Programs

Recommendations	Major Themes
Partnership Agreements	• Clear and consistent communication about the mentor role • Establish clear definition of roles • Revisit the agreements on a regular basis
Year Two Support	• Ensure sustainability • Build capacity by identifying and promoting leadership within beginning teachers • Sanctioning time for professional development and coaching
Principal Training	• Strengthen principals' instructional leadership capacity • Explore models of shared leadership • Provide Leadership Coaching for Beginning Principals
Instructional Coaches as Mentors	• Impact experienced teachers as well as beginning and influences site culture • Hire, train and support mentors in collaboration with the district

Figure 7. Four Recommendations for Induction Programs.

Recommendation 1: Partnership Agreements

While mentors can provide excellent growth opportunities for teachers and principals, it is important to remember the importance of balancing leadership and clearly articulating the work of the roles to all staff.

Clear and consistent communication. The development of a partnership agreement between a mentor/coach and a principal is important in order to define roles, responsibilities and boundaries. This allows for ownership at the site level as there is agreement on the roles the mentor/coach will fill at the school site, as well as what the mentor/coach will not do. This includes identifying who the mentor/coach will work with whether it be only beginning teachers, veterans who request support or required coaching for all as defined by the principal.

Establish clear definition of roles. Partnership agreements also specify the level of support in both human and material resources the mentor/coach can expect from the principal. Expected results and/or goals of the work should be included in the agreement. These include a description of how the mentor/coach will work and what the expected results will be from the work. As with any goal setting, it is important to also set timelines for goal achievement. This frame allows for formative evaluation of the work and the opportunity for adjustment as needed. Once the goals are set it is important to identify the processes the mentor/coach will use for their work. This will provide clarity and priorities for the principal and coach but also for the staff to best understand and utilize the coach's role and skills.

Revisit the agreements on a regular basis. Lastly, communication and confidentiality are essential elements. Scheduling time for face-to-face communication

with a clear purpose is vital. The participants in this study stressed the importance of meeting regularly as well as revisiting the partnership agreements each fall. Additionally, explicitly stating what is confidential and how sensitive topics will be discussed if necessary (Killion & Harrison, 2006) will support effective communication in supporting induction.

Recommendation 2: Year Two Support

Ensure sustainability. Hiring a beginning teacher is a commitment to model ways of thinking and asking questions about teaching and encourage beginning teachers to create and refine practices. It is a commitment to ensure that the experiences of beginning teachers early in their career set the tone for thinking about teaching as a reflective practice, not just a job that is performed repeatedly year after year. Hughes (1999) described the hiring of a beginning teacher as a commitment of not only resources and information, "but to be a resource and to help the teacher learn how to use information well and wisely" (p. 182). It is important to remember that mentoring and induction are not to be used interchangeably. Wong (2004), a proponent of induction and supporting beginning teachers, asserted that simply assigning a mentor to a beginning teacher with no other supports of induction will not systemically result in accelerated professional growth or student achievement.

The Alliance for Excellence in Education (2004) described comprehensive induction as a "package of supports, development, and standards-based assessments provided to beginning teachers during at least their first two years of full time professional teaching: (p. 11). Teaching is both an art and a science, and research has clearly shown the need to practice the art while applying the science of the profession in a

collaborative culture in order to demonstrate mastery. The intentional combination of supervision and mentoring within induction can provide a developmental approach of supporting beginning teachers as they gain skills and develop a collection of strategies.

Wong (2004) reminded us that the beginning teachers hired today "will become the teachers for the next generation. Their success will determine the success of an entire generation of students" (p. 41). Learning to teach is a lifelong process that involves continuous new learning as one "comes into contact with each new student and shares ideas, problems, and solutions with colleagues" (Bartell, 2004, p. 5). A critical component in this teacher development cycle is the induction period. Beginning teachers benefit from a high-quality, comprehensive induction period of at least two years where they are strongly supported year one and gradually released to become independent, reflective practitioners.

Build capacity by identifying and promoting leadership within beginning teachers. In schools where beginning teachers are respected for their knowledge and practice, everyone benefits. There is not a shortage of tasks to be accomplished at the school or district level. Mentors and principals that work closely with beginning teachers at the onset of their careers will likely identify leadership strengths in the beginning teachers. Labeling these strengths and skills for beginning teachers benefits the school and district as beginning teachers give back through their involvement on school and district committees, participate more actively within their grade level team, or advocate within the community for the work and needs of education. This will work to build capacity within the system and lighten the load for other staff members.

Additionally, taking on a leadership role will likely support the beginning teacher in taking ownership in the profession, their district, and school thereby increasing retention rates. Within the induction period, mentors and principals have the opportunity to increase beginning teacher self-efficacy, which can potentially develop high quality teachers who are taking responsibility for professional growth (Elliott**,** Isaacs, & Chugani**,** 2010). The beginning teacher's participation may lead to an increased sense of belonging and community.

Recommendation 3: Principal Training

Sanction time for professional development and coaching. Bartell (2005) stated the importance of principals' work in supporting the success of induction programs. She charges principals with needing to deeply understand and support the induction program goals to ensure consistency with their own goals and visions being promoted at their school sites. Additionally, Bartell urges principals to be supportive of and provide assistance to mentors who serve their beginning teachers. Depending on the past experiences, educational backgrounds and beliefs of principals, they may or may not have the capacity to carry out the work identified by Bartell. In supporting principals in acquiring the necessary skills, Barth (1990) suggested the need for increased professional development opportunities for practicing principals to become "reflective practitioners," capable of learning as they lead (p. 66).

Districts who value the induction process should purposefully include principals in moving beyond matching beginning teachers to mentors and making time for them to visit. Just as beginning teachers want to know what their principal expects of them, principals need to know and understand their role and responsibilities regarding

beginning teacher induction. Principals are called upon to manage resources and lead people. Principals recognize that beginning teachers need help, but many struggle with the methods of providing that help and may not want to admit their struggles or concerns. "Principals are often victims of the work conditions that they are trying to change for their teachers" (Brock & Grady, 2001, p. 48). Districts cannot assume principals know and understand their critical role in teacher development, effectiveness, and beginning teacher induction. "School districts should provide meaningful professional development opportunities for principals that are focused on the effective practice of new teacher support, development, and assessment" (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 40). Time specifically designed for principal learning opportunities to promote clarity and confidence in their role as an instructional leader must be a priority.

  Strengthen principals' instructional leadership capacity. When districts provide clear expectations for principals as instructional leaders, the work and goals are clear to all stakeholders. Many induction programs provide training to principals so that they understand the program and can fully support the work messages that beginning teachers receive (Bartell, 2005). Ultimately, the understanding of principals should not only allow them to support the induction activities to work more directly and more effectively with those who are also providing support to ensure new teacher success. This opens the door of opportunity for mentors to partner with principals to promote quality teaching as well as encouraging the leaders to grow professionally. When principals are "learners as well as leaders" in overcoming the obstacles to their learning (Barth & Guest, 1990, p. 72) they model their openness to learn and grow. Their staff notice and

are more likely to seek or accept the opportunity to work with a colleague to make instructional improvements.

Explore models of shared leadership. Collaborative cultures require shared leadership where every teacher can be a leader of change and improvement (Fullan, 2001). The major views of instructional supervision clearly suggest that the principal often delegates much of the direct observation, feedback, and support of beginning teachers to mentors or other instructional specialists. When principals engage in these activities, it is primarily for the purpose of evaluating the beginning teacher's performance. Hughes (1999) reported that the limited contact beginning teachers have with principals and the principal's evaluative role can certainly pose obstacles to open and trusting relationships. Because the principal serves in an evaluative role, the beginning teacher is often reluctant to discuss areas of concern too openly. In fact, in many cases, the mentor will help to prepare the new teacher for the more formal evaluation that will be conducted by the principal. This can provide an opportunity for collaboration and shared leadership between principals and mentors. Principals need to know that mentor/coaches will strengthen, not threaten, their leadership and can also reinforce and align the work of teachers and principal. When triad partnerships work together they create the environments in which teachers thrive and students succeed (Chako, 2009). Moir (2009) reminded us of the importance of mentors communicating their work without breaching mentor-teacher confidentiality, and principals embracing mentors as their "compatriots and co-leaders for learning" (p. 1). Regardless of the model, high-quality, comprehensive induction requires the active participation of the

principal working in deliberate collaboration with mentors to support the professional growth of beginning teachers.

Provide leadership coaching for beginning principals. The participating district was currently exploring the concept of providing mentors for beginning principals. This research has provided evidence to support the fact that principals play a key role in the induction process for beginning teachers. The role of the principal is vital in the lives of beginning teachers and mentors but also in "establishing and reinforcing key values, beliefs, rituals, and social norms associated with the school's mission" (Hughes, 1999, p. 192). "The principal plays a pivotal role in creating and nurturing a positive school culture (Brock & Grady, 2001, p. 35). Principals' actions communicate what they value and believe to be most important. Just as the work of supporting, developing and evaluating beginning teachers is too big to fall on the shoulders of a single mentor, the responsibility cannot rely completely on principals.

The success of the beginning teacher is the responsibility of all staff in the building; Induction must become institutionalized as an integral part of the professional development of the district.

The New Teacher Center has developed a Principal Induction program which focuses on principals as teacher developers and culture-shapers. The program is a comprehensive approach which builds upon the knowledge and structure of comprehensive teacher induction programs. Stronge et al. (2008) suggested that "all schools need principals to exercise their roles as instructional leaders who ensure the quality of instruction" (p. 4). As induction programs become imbedded in the cultures of schools to promote the professional growth and student achievement, principals will need

ongoing, collaborative support to meet the multiple role expectations which exist for school leaders. The concept of leadership coaching, or induction is a topic worthy of future study.

Recommendation 4: Instructional Coaches as Mentors

Impact experienced teachers as well as beginning and influence site culture. There is much written cautioning educators to not blur the lines between instructional coaches and mentors. I am in agreement that induction teams and district leadership must clearly define the work of mentors and coaches. With increased accountability and expectations for educators to raise student achievement, teachers cannot operate independently and must utilize the collective expertise of colleagues.

First and foremost induction programs work to accelerate the practice of beginning teachers to impact student achievement. Arguably, a strong secondary goal is to develop a culture of feedback and professional growth for all teachers, site-based instructional coaches who also serve as mentors for beginning teachers should be considered. When sites have the support of a site-based instructional coach and a district-provided mentor, beginning teachers can get caught in the middle and now know who to go to for support. Additionally, the work of the instructional coach must align with a school's improvement plans and goals of the principal. If mentors are not a part of this process at the school site, they may be sending mixed or even contradictory messages to beginning teachers. By training quality instructional coaches to also serve as mentors, they can seamlessly integrate the agendas of teachers, principals, and district office staff to provide the best learning opportunities for students.

Hire, train, and support mentors in collaboration with the district. Just as the beliefs, actions, and dispositions of the principal are vital to the culture and achievement of the school, the same can be said about the importance of selecting mentors. Districts who clearly articulate the purpose and goals of the induction program and its alignment with district priorities can collaborate with building principals to hire, train and support instructional coaches who serve as site-based mentors.

Final Thoughts

This research was designed to better understand the impacts of principals' work with beginning teachers and their mentors and how it changes or alters how they understand and interact with teachers more broadly. In addition to defining specific principal behaviors and actions, the beliefs, values, motivations and commitments of the participating principals were revealed. Though at times these four principals' work and actions appeared exceptional, within their contextual setting they acted as expected. This analysis made visible and explicit the ordinary, as well as extraordinary work these four principals did on behalf of beginning teachers and their mentors. This research made the work of principals engaged in beginning teacher support known and visible, adding to the research upon which sound instructional leadership ultimately rests.

APPENDICES

Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Partnering For Success: The Principals' Role in Beginning Teacher-

Mentor-Principal Relationships

Principal Investigator: Rachael Agre

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in research examining the type of principal's

support, the frequency of that support, and the perceived importance of that support

within a beginning teacher induction program. You are invited as you are participating in

the North Dakota Teacher Support System and may have opinions or knowledge about

this process. Your participation is voluntary. Between 20 and 50 people will take part in

this study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of this research study is to determine any differences between the

perceptions of new teachers and their principals regarding the principal's role in

supporting beginning teacher induction. The principal investigator will use this

information to write and share scholarly articles regarding elementary principal roles in

induction programs.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate in this study, you may be interviewed about your

knowledge, experiences, or opinions on the role of elementary principals in supporting

beginning teacher induction. These interviews will typically last thirty (30) minutes to

ninety (90) minutes.

You will be asked if digital voice recordings may be made of your interview. Such recordings will be used only for writing down exactly what you say. Your name will remain secret. Digital tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet after use. Being recorded is voluntary. You may still participate without being recorded.

WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

Information learned from this study will be used in a dissertation, journal articles, or in presentations. None of these will identify you personally. You will be referred to by a made up name instead. Interviews, notes, and any video or audio recordings will be stored in a locked cabinet when not in use. Any information from the data that could identify you will be removed.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS?

The risks involved with this study include the possibility of loss of confidentiality. Though I take many steps to ensure secrecy, the identity of participants might accidentally become known. This may cause embarrassment or discomfort. Some questions I ask about your experiences and opinions might cause worry, embarrassment, discomfort, or sadness. You may choose not to answer such questions. Referrals to counseling will be available should you experience bad feelings, but no money is available from the study to pay for such services. Another drawback for you might include the amount of time spent in interviews or answering questionnaires.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS?

No direct benefit is guaranteed to you from participating in this study. Your participation in this research, however, may benefit you or other people in the future by

helping us learn more about the role of elementary principals in beginning teacher induction.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY?

No participants will receive pay for taking part in the study.

IF I DECIDE TO START THE STUDY, CAN I CHANGE MY MIND?

Your decision to participate in this research is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you do decide to take part, you may change your mind at any time without penalty or loss of benefits that you had before the study. Your decision to participate or not in this study will not affect any relationship you might have with employers or service providers. You may choose not to participate in certain interviews and you can skip any questions you do not want to answer.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about this research in the future, please contact the principal investigator, Rachael Agre, at (701) 429-1188 or by E-mail (agrer@fargo.k12.nd.us). If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if you have any concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279. Please call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or if you wish to talk with someone else.

Authorization to participate in the research study:

I have read the information in this consent form, had any questions answered, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this consent form.

_____

Participant's Name (please print)

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator or Person Obtaining Consent   Date

North Dakota
Teacher
Support
System

Laurie Stenehjem, Coordinator

2718 Gateway Avenue, Bismarck, ND 58503

701.328.9644

lstenehj@nd.gov

February 13, 2012

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This letter is to verify that, in my position as coordinator of the North Dakota

Teacher Support System, I am happy to assist Rachael Agre with recruitment of

subjects for her research project through the University of North Dakota

concerning mentoring in North Dakota.

Sincerely,

Laurie Stenehjem,

Coordinator, ND Teacher Support System

February 18, 2012

Rachael Agre
6401 13 Street North
Fargo, North Dakota 58102

Re: Agreement to participate in proposed field research study

Dear Ms. Agre:

The _____ Public School District has agreed to participate in a study to gather information on the role of principals in teacher induction programs. The overall purpose of the study is to describe the types of principal support, the frequency of that support, and the perceived importance of that support within beginning teacher induction programs. The results will provide perception data from principals, mentors and beginning teachers who participate in this study. It is understood that all participation is voluntary and that individuals can withdraw from the project at any time.

Sincerely,

February 27, 2012

Rachael Agre
6401 13th Street North
Fargo, ND 58102

Dear Ms. Agre:

We are pleased to inform you that your project titled, "Partnering For Success: Beginning Teacher-Mentor-Principal Relationships" (IRB-201202-288) has been reviewed and approved by the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board (IRB). The expiration date of this approval is February 11, 2013. Your project cannot continue beyond this date without an approved Research Project Review and Progress Report.

As principal investigator for a study involving human participants, you assume certain responsibilities to the University of North Dakota and the UND IRB. Specifically, an unanticipated problem or adverse event occurring in the course of the research project must be reported within 5 days to the IRB Chairperson or the IRB office by submitting an Unanticipated Problem/Adverse Event Form. Any changes to or departures from the Protocol or Consent Forms must receive IRB approval prior to being implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects or others.)

All Full Board and Expedited proposals must be reviewed at least once a year. Approximately ten months from your initial review date, you will receive a letter stating that approval of your project is about to expire. If a complete Research Project Review and Progress Report is not received as scheduled, your project will be terminated, and you must stop all research procedures, recruitment, enrollment, interventions, data collection, and data analysis. The IRB will not accept future research projects from you until research is current. In order to avoid a discontinuation of IRB approval and possible suspension of your research, the Research Project Review and Progress Report must be returned to the IRB office at least six weeks before the expiration date listed above. If your research, including data analysis, is completed before the expiration date, you must submit a Research Project Termination form to the IRB office so your file can be closed. The required forms are available on the IRB website.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at (701) 777-4279 or e-mail michelle.bowles@research.und.edu.

Sincerely,

Michelle L. Bowles, M.P.A., CIP
IRB Coordinator

MLB/jle

Enclosures

REPORT OF ACTION: EXEMPT/EXPEDITED REVIEW
University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board

Date: 2/17/2012   **Project Number:** IRB-201202-288

Principal Investigator: Agre, Rachael

Department: Educational Leadership

Project Title: Partnering For Success: Beginning Teacher-Mentor-Principal Relationships

The above referenced project was reviewed by a designated member for the University's Institutional Review Board on _____February 12, 2012_____ and the following action was taken:

☒ Project approved. **Expedited Review** Category No. ___1___

  Next scheduled review must be before: _____February 11, 2013_____

  ☒ Copies of the attached consent form with the IRB approval stamp dated _____February 12, 2012_____ must be used in obtaining consent for this study.

☐ Project approved. **Exempt Review** Category No. _____
  This approval is valid until _____ as long as approved procedures are followed. No periodic review scheduled unless so stated in the Remarks Section.

  ☐ Copies of the attached consent form with the IRB approval stamp dated _____ must be used in obtaining consent for this study.

☐ Minor modifications required. The required corrections/additions must be submitted to RDC for review and approval. **This study may NOT be started UNTIL final IRB approval has been received.**

☐ Project approval deferred. **This study may not be started until final IRB approval has been received.** (See Remarks Section for further information.)

☐ Disapproved claim of exemption. This project requires Expedited or Full Board review. The Human Subjects Review Form must be filled out and submitted to the IRB for review.

☐ Proposed project is not human subject research and does not require IRB review.
  ☐ Not Research   ☐ Not Human Subject
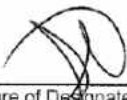
PLEASE NOTE: Requested revisions for student proposals MUST include adviser's signature. All revisions MUST be highlighted.

☒ Education Requirements Completed. (Project cannot be started until IRB education requirements are met.)

cc: Dr. Pauline Stonehouse (w/o attach.)

_____   2-12-12
Signature of Designated IRB Member   Date
UND's Institutional Review Board

If the proposed project (clinical medical) is to be part of a research activity funded by a Federal Agency, a special assurance statement or a completed 310 Form may be required. Contact RDC to obtain the required documents.

(Revised 10/2006)

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Appendix B

Principal Interview

Learning to Lead

1. Why did you become an elementary principal?

   - What do you like about the work?

   - What do you find most challenging?

2. Can you tell me about your professional history? (How long have you been a principal? How long have you worked in this district?)

3. How would you describe the role of a principal? What is the most important part of your job?

4. Think back to your formal administrative training

   - What did this training most prepare you to do as a principal?

   - Is there something you wish you would have learned during this training? If yes, describe.

5. Once on the job, what kinds of things did you have to learn your first years?

   - How did you improve at that?

   - Did you have a mentor (formal/informal)?

6. Are there things you are still learning? If yes, tell me about them.

   - What helps you learn that?

7. Have your received training for your work with beginning teachers?

   - If yes, please tell me about that.

   - If no, is there some kind of training you think would be helpful?

8. How have you changed as a principal since your first year?

   - What/who most influence those changes?

   - What changes lie ahead for you as a principal?

9. Describe how you see yourself as a leader.

   - Is this how your staff sees you?

   - Is this how beginning teachers see you?

Learning to Teach

You were a teacher before you were a principal. This next set of questions asks you to reflect on your own learning to teach.

10. What did your teacher preparation help you know or do as a beginning classroom teacher? Were there aspects of teaching that it did not prepare you for? If yes, explain.

11. Now think about your first year of teaching. What was your experience like?

    - What did you most need to learn?

    - How did you learn that?

    - Who helped you learn that?

12. How do you think your experience as a beginning teacher is like the beginning teachers you work with? Is it different?

13. What was your relationship with the principal like?

Principal Beliefs about beginning teacher support and professional growth

14. What role do you play in the hiring process?

    - How are classroom placements and extra duties assigned?

- Is this the same for all teachers? Why or why not?

15. When you hire a beginning teacher, what are you expecting them to know and do?

16. What do beginning teachers in your school most need to learn in their first years on the job to be effective?

  - How do they best learn that?

  - How would you describe your role in helping them learn these things?

  - How long does it take for someone to get to be a really good teacher?

17. What do you do early in the fall of the year support beginning teachers?

  - Does this change as the year progresses?

18. What role are you likely to play when the beginning teacher seems to be doing well?

  - Is this something you discuss with the beginning teacher's mentor?

19. What role are you likely to play when the beginning teacher seems to be struggling?

  - When might you intervene?

  - Can you tell me about a time when you did this?

  - Is this something you discussed with the beginning teacher's mentor?

Principal beliefs about beginning teacher assessment and evaluation

As principal, you are responsible for conducting beginning teacher evaluations.

20. What do you feel counts as evidence of growth or learning in the evaluation process?

- Can you give an example?

21. Is this the same criteria or process you use with experienced teachers? If no, what's different?

22. Do you find the teacher evaluation process helpful? Why? Who benefits?

Working with Mentors

This next set of questions focuses on your work with mentors.

23. How often have you observed mentors and beginning teachers working together?

- What types of things have you seen?

- What is your understanding of their work?

- How would you characterize their relationship with one another?

24. What are your expectations for a mentor's work with beginning teachers?

- What are your expectations for a mentors' work with you?

- Have you ever disagreed with a policy of the mentor or induction program?

25. Have you ever disagreed with a mentor over a beginning teacher's progress or needs?

- If yes, tell me about what happened.

- If no, can you imagine under what circumstances this might happen?

26. As a principal, how would you describe your role (or responsibilities) in relationship to the mentor(s)?

- Where does this understanding come from?

- Are there things about your role that you would change if you could?

27. Does this program have an effect on the building overall (e.g., the way teachers

talk about teaching or the things they do with students)?

28. Has this program had an impact on you? How?

Appendix C

Mentor Interview

1. Do you often talk with your building principal? Why or why not?

    - What kinds of things do you talk about?

    - How often does this happen?

    - Are there things you don't talk to your principal about? Why?

2. Is the evaluation process a learning opportunity for your beginning teacher(s)?

   Why or why not?

    - If yes, what did he/she learn?

    - What role did the principal play?

    - Could the principal have done something different to make it a better

      learning opportunity?

3. Thinking back over your work as a mentor, are there things principals have done

   to support beginning teachers that only he/she, as a principal, could do?

    - Are there things he/she did or has done to support you?

   Are there things he/she did or has done which may have caused a roadblock

   for your work?

Appendix D

Beginning Teacher Interview

Relationship with Principal

1. What is your relationship with you principal like this year?

   - Did you have much contact?

   - Is this the amount of contact that you expected?

2. Were there specific things your principal did to support you?

   - How important are/were these interactions to your learning to be a teacher?

3. How did your principal evaluation work this year?

   - Was it helpful to you? How and why?

   - Would anything have made it better?

4. How is the principal evaluation different from or similar to the work you do with your mentor?

5. Did you and your principal ever disagree? How was that solved?

Appendix E

Building Level Student Performance Coach

Position Title: Elementary Student Performance Coach

Department: Curriculum and Instruction

Supervisor: District Student Performance Coach/ Assistant Superintendent

Job Summary: To positively impact student achievement at assigned sites through support, training, and coaching which builds school and teacher capacity to increase classroom achievement

Responsibilities:
- Provide support/coaching for new teachers and veteran staff (priority given to teachers with less than 5 years of teaching experience)
- Co-teach and model instruction (use the gradual release model)
- Facilitate protocols for looking at student work to drive instructional decisions
- Facilitate training and coaching in differentiation (includes RtI-A), classroom management (includes RtI-B), research based instructional methods and strategies, and data driven instruction
- Collaborate with building principal, individual teachers, and teams of teachers
- Assist in collection of data on the impact of student performance coach activities on student achievement
- Assist with design and implementation of building-level professional development with direction of District Student Performance Coach
- Support School Leadership Teams
- Elementary Level: facilitate training and coaching for all staff in literacy, numeracy, and behavior
- Attend district training/support sessions weekly or as required

Work Requirements and Characteristics
- Evidence of a minimum of 3-5 years of successful classroom teaching experience
- Evidence of effective communication skills, problem solving skills, collaboration skills, interpersonal skills, facilitation skills
- Evidence of planning and organization skills
- Ability to manage time and multiple priorities
- Knowledge and experience in curriculum implementation
- Knowledge of adult learning
- Knowledge of effective instructional strategies and research-based practices in math, literacy, and behavior
- Evidence of taking leadership positions over the past three years
- Evidence of continued professional development
- Passion for increased student learning

- Willingness to participate in limited summer training
- Completion of ND Coaching training in the first year of job

Ongoing Program Supervision/Evaluation
- Program/position description supervision done by District Student Performance coach and Assistant Superintendent
- Building-level Student Performance Coaches will be evaluated by Assistant Superintendent and District Student Performance Coach
- District has the responsibility to assign building level coaches

Appendix F

District Commitment Requirements

Mentor Program
Here's Our Commitment!

FIRST YEAR TEACHER
NEW TO PROFESSION
Year 1

- One-on-one conference - Minimum of 30 hours (15 each semester)
- Be observed by your mentor (minimum 15 minutes)—6 times per year (September, October, November, January, March, April)—(pre-brief, observe, post-brief)
- Videotape your teaching and discuss with mentor—2 times per year (October and February)
- Observe other teachers—12 hours per year (6 hours by January 15; Half day or Full day)
- Complete Analysis of Student Work—1 time in the year
- Goal Set—1 full cycle (set goals, mid-year, reflection)
- Participate in ALL SEEC Beginning Teacher Network Trainings
- Attend New Teacher Meetings

FIRST YEAR TEACHER
NEW TO PROFESSION
Year 2

- One-on-one conferencing - Minimum of 15 hours (7.5 each semester)
- Be observed by your mentor (40-60 minutes long)—3 times per year (October, January, March)—1 of 3 formal cycle observations (pre-brief, observe, post-brief)
- Videotape your teaching and discuss with mentor—1 time per year-Completed by February
- Observe other teachers—6 hours per year (3 hours by January 15; Half day or Full day)
- Complete Analysis of Student Work—1 time in the year
- Goal Set—1 full cycle (set goals, mid-year, reflection)

NEW TEACHER
1-4 YEARS-EXPERIENCE
Year 1

- One-on-one conferencing - Minimum of 15 hours (7.5 each semester)
- Be observed by your mentor (40-60 minutes long)—3 times per year (October, January, March)—1 of 3 formal cycle observations (pre-brief, observe, post-brief)
- Videotape your teaching and discuss with mentor—1 time per year-Completed by February
- Observe other teachers—6 hours per year (3 hours by January 15; Half day or Full day)
- Complete Analysis of Student Work—1 time in the year
- Goal Set—1 full cycle (set goals, mid-year, reflection)
- Attend New Teacher Meetings

Mentor Program
Here's Our Commitment!

MENTOR

- One-on-one conference - Minimum of 15 or 30 hours for the year (15 – Experienced; 30 – New)

- Be observed by your mentor (minimum 15 minutes)—3 or 6 times per year (3 – Experienced; 6 – New)

- Videotape your teaching and discuss with mentor —1 or 2 times per year (1 – Experienced; 2 – New)

- Observe other teachers —6 or 12 hours per year (6–Experienced; 12–New)

- Complete Analysis of Student Work - –1 time in the year

- Goal Set—1 full cycle (set goals, mid-year, reflection)

- Host a Triad meeting with principal and new teacher at the start of the year and in January

PRINCIPAL

- Participate in the one day Role of the Principal training –or-online NDTSS principal training

- Attend principal breakfasts

- Host a Triad meeting with mentor and new teacher at the start of the year and in January

- Share expectations

- Assign Buddy

- Support mentor and new teacher

- Verify completion of program activities

- Conduct teacher evaluations and formative observations

- Communicate school culture

- Plan situations that create high probability of success

DISTRICT

- Provide a minimum of 5 days substitute coverage for mentors and new teachers to share for observation purposes and participation in SEEC Beginning Teacher Network

- Provide access to technology equipment and support needed for Program Requirements

- Support new teachers, mentors, and principals

- Provide New Teacher Meetings, Mentor Forums, and Mentor Training

- Provide New Teacher Orientation

- Provide other layers of support including professional learning communities, content training, demonstration classrooms, as well as building and district professional development opportunities.

REFERENCES

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