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Perceptions of Mentors and New Teachers: A Case Study of a Mentoring Program in Northeast
Tennessee

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

by

Gregory Scott Wallace

December 2009

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Keywords: Mentoring, New Teacher, Master Teacher

ABSTRACT

Perceptions of Mentors and New Teachers: A Case Study of a Mentoring Program in Northeast Tennessee

by

Gregory Scott Wallace

This study included 9 new teachers all of whom were assigned master teachers as mentors. The study also included 11 mentor teachers who participated in this study. There were 20 participants in this case study. The study was conducted in the Johnson City School System.

This qualitative case study was conducted by interviewing 20 participants in the mentoring program. Eleven mentor teachers and 9 new teachers were chosen through purposeful sampling. A list of possible participants was obtained from the Johnson City Schools Central Office and an email was sent to possible participants explaining the nature of the study. Participants signed an Informed Consent Form (Appendix D) and an interview guide was used (Appendix A). *Probes*, an interview technique that allows the interviewer to delve deeper following an interviewee's response was used to gain a richer understanding of the respondents' views (Merriam, 1998).

During data analysis, 8 themes were identified as having positive or negative results of the mentoring process. These themes were: (a) relationships, (b) common planning time, (c) similar personality styles, (d) teaching practices, (e) program structure, (f) support system, (g) classroom organization and management, and (h) equal learning opportunities.

Based on the research the following conclusions were presented. Mentoring programs are an important part of teacher induction. Positive relationships are critical to fostering successful mentoring teams. Common planning is essential to maximize the mentoring process.

Strong support systems assist mentors and new teachers. Mentoring is an important component of successful transitions into a new school.

Recommendations for enhancing the mentoring program included the following:

1. To have a long-term study that tracks the progress of new teachers over a 3-year period.
2. To include administration as a part of the initial training program study.
3. To compare and contrast the difference between first career new teachers and those who have had previous careers and examine how the mentoring process affects the different populations.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Darcy. Thank you for always remaining positive and encouraging me to take the road less traveled. You have inspired me, encouraged me, and simply made me want to be a better person. This work would not be possible without you.

It is also dedicated to my father-in-law and mother-in-law, Dr. C. Robert and Bonnie Wetzel, for accepting me as their son and showing me the true meaning of family.

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Many people have been instrumental in this process. Friends, family, and classmates have all at times encouraged, prodded, and provided me with the examples of what it takes to be an effective leader.

Two principals, Mrs. Amy Stover and Mrs. Elizabeth Sells, have provided me with constant encouragement and unparalleled access into the world of an administrator. I only hope to be as an effective servant-leader as you both.

A special thanks to my committee, Dr. Glover, Dr. Ralston, Dr. Foley, and especially my chair Dr. Pam Scott, for their professional insight and encouragement.

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OPENING VIGNETTE

“Place a good person in a bad system and the system will win every time.”

--Seymore Sarason (Schmoker, 2006)

In 16 years of experience in the field of education, I have observed that many teachers do not make it past the first few years of teaching. Although there has been much discussion about the possible reasons for such a high percentage of turnover, I contend that much of the success of retention of new teachers is directly related to the effectiveness of mentor relationships.

At South Side Elementary during 2007-2008 I witnessed the positive effects of a newly enhanced mentoring program initiated by the Johnson City School System. I wrote the following poem about a first year teacher and how the mentoring process affected her in a positive way.

*It is the night I fear the most...
No it is not the absence of light
nor the rotation of time that awakens me.
I need no night light
and dream not of things that lurk in the deep.
My fear is much greater....
It stirs deep within me
and erodes the foundation of who I am.
In stealth it stalked my childhood,
striking me down as I reached out.
In adolescence...an albatross
attempting to deal my hopes a fatal blow.
I am now a young adult...
with other trumpeting a persistent praise
That I know to be true
yet find harder to believe...
But here I stand....
In the figurative shadows between hope and self doubt,
Standing ever stronger and
For now hoping and praying that forever I bid farewell to my destructive self.*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is one of the greatest and most enduring of professions. Formal and informal teaching has been a part of the human condition since the beginning of time. Over the last several years as teaching has become increasingly recognized as a distinct and unique discipline, much effort has gone into deciding what makes a great teacher. One area of continued research is the focus on teacher mentoring and its impact on teacher retention. As many as 30% of teachers leave their profession within the first 2 years of teaching and 50% leave within the first 7 years (Udelhofen & Larson, 2003). Systems continue to scrutinize effective ways to be able to retain existing employees. High teacher turnover impacts a school's ability to build cohesive staff: it costs additional money to continue to train teachers; and it can be demoralizing for students, parents, and administrators. It is frustrating to administrators, parents, and all stakeholders as they continue to watch the revolving door as educators move in and out of the profession. Promoting and developing an effective mentoring program can dramatically reduce the number of teachers leaving the profession (Udelhofen & Larson).

As teaching continues to grow as a profession, educators must continue to examine the types of programs they provide to nurture and strengthen teachers. No program can be more important than an effective mentoring program that allows systems to retain, develop, and enhance teachers' ability to be effective. An educator's job is to teach students.

Discussing mentoring programs is not always easy because one must first look at the many aspects of mentoring. One must define what types of mentoring are to occur, what the program will include, and who is ultimately responsible for the success, failure, and evaluation

of the program. In the following pages I discuss two primary types of mentoring: the classic mentor where an administrator matches a master teacher with a 1st-year teacher and the transitional mentor where mentors are matched with experienced professionals from other systems with the purpose of acclimating them to the current systems' procedures and policies.

In 2000, Johnson City Schools decided to make mentoring new teachers a more formal part of new teacher training. At the time, no money was allotted for the mentoring relationship; however, a handbook was developed and training was provided. The handbook *Mentoring Matters: A Handbook for Teacher Mentors* was used as a guide for standardizing the mentoring process in the schools. In 2007, as part of the negotiated contract, Johnson City Schools began to provide a stipend of up to \$500 for mentor teachers. These teachers were trained through the Central Office with the training being provided by Debra Bentley (personal communication, August 27, 2009).

The following assumptions guide Johnson City Schools' mentoring program:

1. Mentoring is an investment in retention, integration, and continual growth.
2. The environment is a critical factor in establishing a learning-focused mentoring program.
3. Mentoring relationships offer opportunities for reciprocal growth and learning.
4. The central goal for mentoring programs is improved student learning.
5. A successful mentoring program will be integral to the implementation of other initiatives. (Humbar, Lipton, & Wellman, 2000).

I use these guiding principles as I examine the extant literature and specific examples of how the various types of mentoring have been implemented.

Finally, I examine the importance of effective matches between new teachers and their mentors. Effective matching may include personalities, grade level, and content level. To simply place an “experienced” teacher with a new hire can be an invitation to disaster regardless of the overall stated goals. There must be a measure of accountability, evaluation, and appropriate feedback to ensure the program’s success. Matching teachers can be difficult and limited by differences in grade levels, available system funds, personality differences, and subject differences, but it must be done with the greatest of care (Rutherford, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

School districts are expected to provide a high quality education. As the result of the increased accountability required by the No Child Left Behind Reauthorization Act of 2008, school districts are under increasing pressure to demonstrate student achievement. One such way is to hire quality applicants, nurture those new hires, and, most importantly, keep strong teachers from leaving the profession. An important component of any effective new teacher training program is a well developed teacher mentoring program (Pelletier, 2006).

The intent of this study is to examine the teacher-mentor relationship in the Johnson City School system. This study examines the various types of mentor styles, methods, and effectiveness of the overall program. Particular attention is paid to beginning teachers and their overall development as a result of this process.

Research Questions

To examine the perceptions of mentors and new teachers within the Johnson City Schools mentoring program, the following research questions were posed:

1. From the perspective of new teachers, what are the key factors in developing a positive and impactful teacher mentoring program?
2. From the perspective of new teachers, what have been the most difficult aspects of the mentoring program?
3. From the perspective of mentor teachers, what are the key factors in developing a positive and impactful teacher mentoring program?
4. From the perspective of mentors, what have been the most difficult aspects of the mentoring program?
5. How is this program implemented in different ways within the Johnson City School System?
6. In what ways does that difference, if any, influence the experiences of new teachers from one school to another?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the knowledge base of mentoring and its impact on new teacher training and retention. This study may open a broader dialogue about the mentoring process and how mentors' and new teachers' perceptions can help shape the direction of mentoring program. This study may also serve as vehicle of communication between mentor teachers, new teachers, building administrators, and central office personnel.

Scope of the Study

This study addressed the six research questions stated above through qualitative methodology in which 20 mentor and new teachers involved in the official mentoring program of Johnson City Schools were interviewed. Twenty teachers were interviewed using the Interview Guide (Appendix A). The purpose of the interviews was to gather information regarding

expressed perceptions and viewpoints about the mentoring program developed and implemented by Johnson City Schools. Individual taped interviews were the primary source of data collection. The interviewer followed the interview guide with the use of probes to gain further understanding of the interviewees' responses. The researcher maintained objectivity throughout this study and used a reflection guide (Appendix C) regularly to ensure objectivity. The use of an auditor and member checking was also used to verify interview content.

Statement of Research Bias and Limitations

As an educator for the past 16 years, I have observed differences in how systems approach new teacher induction. Mentoring has been one part of the induction process. I have worked for two school systems and been a mentor in both. In the system where I was previously employed, I served as a mentor and a coordinator of the mentoring program. As such, I became very frustrated with the lack of a system-wide cohesive plan to assist new teachers in their development. Even though I felt undertrained and inadequate in my role, I struggled to provide resources and support for new teachers.

I have also received mentoring and been a mentor in Johnson City Schools. It has been through this process that I was able to see firsthand the need for a more cohesive and thorough program. I am currently in an administrative role for the system in which this study was completed but have no oversight or influence on the mentoring program.

This qualitative study also has limitations. It offers an examination of 20 interviews. It is not intended to be a comprehensive look at all mentors in Johnson City Schools; rather, it is a snapshot of teachers' perceptions as a way to examine program effectiveness.

Definition of Terms

Mentoring refers to relationships that make a significant emotional and intellectual difference in the induction experience for new teachers, as well as in their continuing professional practice. These clearly structured entries into the profession frame the learning journey from novice to expert.

New Teacher refers to any person with less than 3 years experience and who has been involved in the official mentoring program of Johnson City Schools.

Mentor Teacher refers to any tenured teacher who has been assigned a new teacher in the last year for the purpose of mentoring and who is an official participant of the mentoring program of Johnson City Schools.

New Teacher Induction refers to the larger process of new teacher development of which mentoring is an important first step.

Overview of this Study

Chapter 1 establishes the need for this study. Chapter 2 is a review of literature of new teacher mentoring and an examination of some nationally recognized mentoring programs. Chapter 3 consists of methodologies and procedures used to gather data and include ethical protocol data sources and data collection. Chapter 4 reports the data collections and findings. Chapter 5 reflects conclusions, summary, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A common theme in the literature is that new teachers need help. Entering a situation where they are considered the expert and required to put theory into practice has resulted in less than desirable results. Ingersoll (2003) noted that 14% of new teachers leave by the end of their first year, 33% leave within the first 3 years, and almost 50% leave within the first 5 years. Many contributing factors must be considered including poor training, poor leadership, and poor choice of profession, but one area that can be improved upon is the need for new teacher support. Teachers often cite lack of support and poor working conditions as primary factors in their decision to leave the profession (Wiebke & Bardin, 2009). In fact, there are generally four factors that contribute to teacher attrition: salaries, working conditions, teacher preparation, and mentoring support (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Many programs have been developed to assist new teachers as more systems recognize the need to retain teachers. Boreen, Johnson, Niday, and Potts (2000) indicate that both the financial cost and the practical costs to the systems for the loss of trained teachers are measurable. In today's world of high stakes testing, school systems need to find ways for novice teachers to be prepared from the beginning of their careers to avoid any negative impact from poor performance. Deciding what goes into a mentoring program has been the subject of much discussion. Should new teacher induction be restricted to beginning inservice? Should school systems follow a set curriculum that guides the mentee-mentor relationships? Should mentors only come from teachers in the same content area? These questions and more suggest that there has been no general consensus as to a single effective approach to mentoring. Athanases et al.

(2008) suggested that the lack of curricula in most mentoring programs demonstrates the unpredictable nature of two people (the mentor and new teacher) attempting to sort out the difficult job of teaching.

Mentoring Defined

How mentoring is defined is an important aspect of any study of mentoring relationships. Some research limits the definition of mentors to terms of student teaching placements. Some are limited only to 1st-year teachers; however, some expand that view to include anyone new to a particular system, while others would include any new person in a particular school. Some would include veteran teachers who just need information as to how the building and the administration operate (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). Many definitions of mentoring exist, but for the purpose of this study I use the definition by Humbard et al. (2000):

Learning focused mentoring relationships make a significant emotional and intellectual difference in the induction experience for new teachers, as well as in their continuing professional practice. These clearly structured entries into the profession frame the learning journey from novice to expert teaching. (pg.1)

Expectations for mentoring continue to increase dramatically. Many states require school districts to support beginning teachers as part of initial licensure, and support for new teachers has taken on the characteristics of high stakes testing (Gasner, 2002). Daloz (1998) suggests that a mentor's role should be a balance between three critical components:

1. Offering Support-This should include emotional, physical, technical, and informational.
2. Creating Challenge-Whereas support is an important part of the beginning relationship, challenge is critical to novice growth. It requires the new teacher to apply and adapt in real world situations (Humbard, Lipton, & Wellman 2000).

3. Facilitating Vision-Because so many new teachers are still in survival mode, it is important for mentor teachers to help provide vision. This includes both personal and professional visions.

The way mentors have been defined in terms of experience has also undergone changes. Historically, mentor teachers have had an average experience of 8-15 years (Gasner, 2002), but because of the changing profession, it is becoming harder to ensure experienced mentors are available. Mentors are becoming younger and systems are looking at alternative ways to mentor new teachers. It is estimated that two million new teachers will be required in the near future (Martin, 2008) given the approaching retirement of the baby boomer generation, classroom size reductions, and teacher attrition.

The New Teacher Center at the University of California Santa Cruz (NTC) has identified several critical factors in effective teacher mentoring (Moir, 2000). They include the following;

1. Mentor selection is based on a formal application and review process, with an interview by a panel that includes administrators, veteran teachers, union leaders, and current and former mentors.
2. Mentors are prepared for their roles through well-defined and continuous training.

Rowley (1999) asserts that good mentoring programs require formal mentor training as a prerequisite to mentoring

3. Mentors are released from full-time classroom duties for 1 to 3 years, after which they return to the classroom or take another educational role. A full-time released mentor's caseload normally covers 12 to 15 new teachers.

4. New teachers receive 1.5 to 2.5 hours of formally scheduled weekly mentoring support for 2 years.
5. Professional standards provide a clear vision of best practice goals and provide a framework for the mentor's work with the novice teacher. Standard language helps structure learning-focused conversations and teacher goals. The best mentoring programs provide specific descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of mentor teachers (Rowley, 1999).
6. Mentors employ a comprehensive formative assessment system to guide the evaluation of a new teacher's work. The system is framed by professional standards and involves formal data collection and analysis of teacher practice including examination of student work.
7. A mentor's grade-level and subject-area background is matched with those of new teachers. This allows mentoring to focus effectively on content, subject matter knowledge, and alignment of instruction with standards and curriculum initiatives.
8. Mentors ensure that the teacher's instructional priorities align with those of school administrators and the community by meeting separately with school principals on a regular basis.

Teachers, as in any profession, enter their classrooms with differing degrees of confidence and abilities (Rutherford, 2005). Almost all teachers experience frustration when they attempt to marry practice and theory, and many feel as if their decision to enter the profession was poorly made (Ingersoll, 2001). Turley, Powers, and Nakai (2006) discovered that out of 119 teachers surveyed, teachers showed significant improvement in 20 of the 28

area in a New Teacher Confidence Survey. Among the many factors that contributed to their increased confidence levels was the involvement in a mentor relationship.

Tennessee Mentoring Reviewed

The Tennessee Advisory Council of Teacher Education and Certification (2007) recently recommended the following to assist in new teacher retention:

1. The development, implementation, funding, and evaluation of a statewide teacher induction program that includes a high quality mentoring program.
2. The establishment of standards and guidelines for mentor teachers and mentor programs.
3. A stable professional funding source.

These recommendations were a result of the following information:

1. Tennessee loses 41% of new teachers within the first 5 years.
2. Beginning teachers are twice as likely to leave the classroom if they do not participate in a strong induction program.
3. When there is no state oversight, small, rural, or high poverty districts are usually ignored.
4. High poverty and low performing schools have higher turn over rate and are left with fewer experienced teachers.
5. Students who have ineffective teachers for 3 years in a row fall behind academically and are unlikely to achieve the same level of attainment if taught by an effective teacher in

the same period of time. High quality mentoring programs increase teacher effectiveness and student learning.

Phases of First Year Teaching

It is suggested by Moir (2001) that mentors have a basic understanding of the phases that most, if not all, new teachers will endure. Moir identified six stages that can occur across the 1st-year of practice. These were developed for the California Consortium New Teacher Project for the University of California Santa Cruz. They are as follows:

1. *Anticipation* – When new teachers come out of academic work and are excited about the choice of a new job, they are ready to take on the world and eager to put theory into practice. It is that feeling that we get when we are excited about trying something new. The rewards of teaching are one of the most important factors to the decision of a 1st-year teacher to continue in the profession (Anhorn, 2008).
2. *Survival* - Reality hits. New teachers are still enthusiastic but are now getting tired. They are overwhelmed with the “business” side of the profession, keeping up with paperwork, home contacts, and the day-to-day classroom administrative responsibilities. New teachers are working extensive hours and are still not getting ahead. Survival concerns of new teachers are not limited to personal issues.
3. *Disillusionment* - New teachers are still working hard but feel they are not accomplishing their jobs. They are beginning to wonder if they have made the right decision about becoming teachers. Disillusionment often coincides with the time their first evaluations occur and new teachers are faced with making changes. They can also become frustrated by external policies over which they have no control. These policies

govern how the school, district, or educational system functions. If these issues are not covered in mentoring or induction programs, increased disillusionment is the result.

4. Rejuvenation - New teachers have just had a few weeks off for their first break. The year is half over and they can see some improvement. If mentors can help alleviate unnecessary challenges and potential hurdles, 1st-year teachers can establish themselves as viable members of the profession, offering fresh perspectives and rejuvenating spirits (Weasmer, 2000). They now have begun to find what works for them in practice. Issues of classroom management, organization, and correspondence become much more comfortable. They have had some victories and begin to see how their abilities can be useful in the school.
5. Reflection – As the year draws to a conclusion and teachers are getting their assignment for the new school year they begin to evaluate what they did well and to learn from any mistakes. They have a much greater sense of what to expect and feel as if they are headed in the right direction. Time dedicated to reflection according to Turley et al. (2006) provide greater opportunity for teacher self-efficacy and confidence. First year teachers valued their time for reflection in a structured and formal mentoring program. By spending time in reflection teachers were not only able to evaluate their methods, but they were also able to feel a partnership with administration and mentors as they continued their development (Pedro 2006).
6. Anticipation “2” - New teachers look forward to the new school year. They have a more realistic view of the job and a better understanding on how the school functions and how they fit into the community. Teachers evaluate what they have done well and consider possible changes to their teaching strategies, classroom management, and

overall approaches as they prepare for the new school year (Mauer & Zimmerman, 2004).

The Four Ages of Professionalism

Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) address four broad phases in history that affect the way teachers have been viewed and how these views have affected the way teachers learn.

1. *The Pre-Professional Age*- Mentoring was not essential because teachers were viewed as independent workers. Learning occurred mainly through watching others, first in the classroom and then on the job. Mentoring was limited to fellow employee encouragement.
2. *The Age of the Autonomous Professional* – This age was a time when the teaching profession was practiced in isolation. The idea of collaboration only served to diminish one's individualism. Any mentor help was only afforded to beginners and any additional help was seen as weakness.
3. *The Age of Collegial Professional*-Because of the information explosion and a need to have a coordinated approach to a fast-changing society, the individualism of teaching was proving to be ineffective. New models were being introduced that embraced mentoring (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996) and promoted professional learning communities.
4. *The Professional Age*-Schools are no longer defined by traditional boundaries. Teachers deal with more complex issues, greater diversity, and social and moral issues. Mentoring can no longer be seen as an isolated activity that helps teachers become more effective but must be seen through a wider spectrum that allows new teachers to become better professionals (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000).

The opportunities to examine new programs through the prism of history are a very important component of any mentoring program. Understanding what works and how the profession of teaching has changed are necessary requirements of composing an effective mentoring program (Rutherford, 2005).

Underlying Theories of Adult Learning

As we become adults the need to learn by examining our beliefs and validating them continues to help us make informed decisions on our way to life-long discovery (Taylor, 2008). Administrators often view learning through a much wider lens than just student learning. Recognizing and appreciating teachers as learners provide a greater opportunity for learning communities. The roles of mentor, new teacher, and administrator are constantly shifting as participants see themselves as continual learners and not just specifically defined roles (Sergiovanni, 2006).

Trotter (2006) discusses some basic views of adult learning and how these views can help shape the construction of teacher mentoring programs.

1. *Age and Stage Theory*- This theory is broken into two distinct groups, the first group are those who see adult learning as a series of stages that are constructed through how adults view their childhood. Piaget is the most known of these theorists. They are less concerned with chronological age and more concerned with the construction of meaning. Often grouped with “first wave” constructivist, Piaget saw knowledge as coming from and building upon our own thoughts and ideas (Hoy & Hoy, 2006). The second group, the classic constructivist believed that meaning was constructed through a combination of learning (constructing) knowledge from our own experiences and from those experiences

we encounter through various stages in our lives. Those that see adult learning in view of *age* see development and learners for adults along very specific life cycles. Each cycle builds upon the last as we continue to grow and learn. As mentoring programs consider both theories, they need to allow for the growth of individuals throughout their professional lives. Simply put a generic mentoring program will not work.

2. *Cognitive Theory*- This theory deals with knowledge and learning and how that information is stored and processed in the mind (Hoy & Hoy, 2006). Several models have learners developing from the concrete to the abstract. Adult learners are able to develop from those concrete ideas and use this progression internally to motivate and learn. According to this theory, veteran teachers would have an advanced way of learning information and therefore could use a mentoring program to acknowledge the range of teaching experience.
3. *Functional Theory*- This theory is based on problems and experiences that are meaningful to the learner. Adults learn based on what they experience and what is meaningful or needed in their current experiences (Trotter, 2006). When developing mentoring programs for adult learners in school, this theory would emphasize the need to make that experience meaningful. This theory allows new teachers to see that the process is not only intended to help them become better teachers but will make their experiences better.

These three theories serve not as a comprehensive examination of the entire spectrum of adult learning theory, but they serve as a valid reminder that when examining the need for mentoring programs a variety of factors can be considered (Mullen, 2005). Examining the content of a mentoring program or how a mentoring program is implemented without having an understanding of adult learning can limit the value of that study.

Differences Between Induction and Mentoring

It is important to make a distinction between the terms of induction and mentoring as much of the literature uses both. The terms are not synonymous. The term induction is an all inclusive term that refers to the beginning process of sustained professional development. This includes beginning teacher training, early year in-service, new teacher support, and mentoring. Mentoring is one aspect of the induction process.

To use these terms interchangeably causes confusion but to see them as completely separate issues is a mistake as well. In order for most mentoring programs to be effective they must be seen as a part of the overall induction process (Wong, 2004). Induction includes an important mentoring component and has the ability to create excellence in teaching. These programs cultivate and strengthen new teachers with the ultimate outcome of making the education process more effective (Gshwend & Moir, 2007).

Review of Established Mentoring Programs

It is important to recognize that not all aspects of any one mentoring program can be transferable to every situation. However, there are some aspects of successful mentoring programs that are evident in most programs. Marzano (2005) suggests that we examine strategies that are successful across racial, socioeconomic, and geographical areas and find those researched-based strategies that work. The best of these programs must have elements that are transferable in a variety of situations. Local systems must then examine those programs and establish which components will work in their situations. It is important that systems look to adapt not adopt elements to make mentoring work (Boreen, Johnson, Niday, & Potts, 2000).

The New Teacher Center at University of California Santa Cruz (NTC)

The New Teacher Center at University of California Santa Cruz (NTC) has done extensive research on mentoring. It is a national resource center focused on teacher and administrator induction because schools across the United States are now experiencing record numbers of new educators. Because new teachers are often placed in some of the most difficult classes in the neediest schools, and because many new teachers struggle beginning their careers leading to poor retention rates, The New Teacher Center was created to establish an effective mentoring program. The New Teacher Center has a demonstrable record of achievement with long-term new teacher retention rates as high as 95%, compared to a nationwide retention rate of nearly 50% (Moir & Bloom, 2003).

The NTC rests its foundation upon the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project (SCNTP), established in 1988, as a systematic, mentor-based teacher induction model. In working with new teachers and, more recently, new principals, the NTC induction programs help novices not only to survive their early years, but to emerge as confident, skilled professionals. The NTC's unique induction model helps novice educators maintain a strategic focus on student learning and classroom instruction with the guidance of highly trained and supported mentors. The NTC works with new and veteran educators, researchers, and policy makers to support the development of strong induction models by providing resources and programs that address effective mentoring and supervision practices, issues of equity, using student data to improve instruction, and strategies for meeting the needs of English Language Learners. (Moir & Bloom, 2003).

The NTC is a national, nonprofit organization that hopes to provide systematic support to new teachers through the use of full-time mentors. The NTC also uses a formative-assessment system that includes tools such as templates for planning individual lessons, scripts that capture teacher talk and students' reactions during a single class period, mid-year reviews of novice teachers' growth (Olson, 2007). The NTC attempts to provide a framework for guided

conversations between mentors and new teachers that allow the new teachers to focus and reflect on their individual teaching styles and how their styles and methods affect student learning.

The NTC not only focuses on mentoring as an important part of the teacher to teacher relationship, it also focuses on the need for administrative support. It is important for administrators to play a visible and active role as the mentor relationship develops. Mentoring and new teacher development is seen as a process to be participated in by the entire school community. According to the NTC, teachers should no longer be expected to be successful without intensive training, mentoring, induction, and administrative support (Bloom & Stein, 2004).

A key component of the NTC is the selection and training of the mentor. While many school systems believe that mentoring is an important aspect of retaining new teachers, most do not place a large emphasis on the recruitment and training of the mentors. Many systems have developed elaborate interview and screening processes for hiring new teachers, yet when it comes time to match the new teacher with a mentor it is often assigned with little thought and even less training. The mentor recruitment process is seen as critical for the NTC. The rigorous process includes professional development and letters of references as well as interviews with administrators, other teachers, union leaders, and central office staff (Moir & Bloom, 2003). The NTC has been involved in over 9,000 new teacher mentoring and has trained over 90 full time mentor teachers.

New teachers and their mentors are required to spend 1 1/2 to 2 hours a week in direct contact. This contact can take the form of walk-throughs, after school meetings, or formal training (Gschwend & Moir, 2007). As noted, a key component to the success of the NTC

program is ability to have full time mentors who have been appropriately recruited, trained, and paired with new teachers.

The NTC is an example of a successful program that has been used and reviewed throughout the United States. It began as a mandate to assist with the retention of new teachers and subsequently has had substantial impact in California.

Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program.

Another widely examined mentoring program is the BEST program in Connecticut. In 1989-1990, the state implemented the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program. This program had a three-tiered licensing format that included beginning, provisional, and professional. As part of the implementation of the BEST program, Connecticut began requiring districts to assign trained mentors to all 1st-year teachers (Youngs, 2007). All mentors were required to participate in 3 days (24 hours) of BEST mentor training. This training was designed to help new mentors with a guide to address new teacher concerns. Skills such as coaching, reflective inquiry, and classroom management issues were covered in this program. Raymond Pecheone, a scholar in residence at Stanford University, helped design the program when he was a member of the Connecticut State Department of Education. The program was designed to produce outstanding teachers.

The Connecticut State Department of Education regarded the BEST program as a culmination of 20 years of teacher education reform. The program was designed to be a 2-3 year rigorous induction plan that provided teachers with stringent requirements, excellent training, and appropriate support. The hallmark of the BEST program is the teacher support. Mentoring is

assigned and required for all 1st-year teachers and has been extended to continue support throughout the 2nd-year (Pardini, 2002). Rosie Vojtek, a 10 year principal in Connecticut, has seen the positive effects of the BEST program. The program is currently undergoing some revisions by the Connecticut State Department of Education because of concerns about unfunded mandates. Vojtek said that providing strong mentors, attendance in their New Teacher Academy, along with the reflective practice required the BEST program benefits new teachers. All mentors must be BEST trained and are assigned no more than six teachers. These mentors remain with the new teacher through the entire 2-year period. Concern was noted about BEST mentors when trainees were not available in the same school. There was also concern was the BEST program sometimes placed a greater emphasis on portfolio writing than actual teacher capabilities, but with the right modification the belief was that the program would only become stronger. The overall effect is positive and the underlying belief that great teachers make a measurable impact on student learning have provided the rationale for the continuation of the BEST program (personal communication, March 17, 2009).

The Need for Transformational Leadership in Mentoring

Bennis and Nanus (1985) mention four common strategies of transformational leadership as an outline to define and examine this view of leadership. These four strategies, with additional research, outline how this particular view of leadership can be used in the public school system mentoring programs. With an increasing number of new mandates and federal regulations dominating the landscape of public education and the ever-increasing amount of accountability that schools face today, one role of the principal is to provide schools with effective leadership for mentors and help in the transformational process (Rutherford, 2005).

In order for transformational leadership to take place there must be a vision. Mentors can support new teachers with a strong vision and positive beliefs that support that vision (Blanchard, 1999). Blanchard suggests people are much more willing to commit to a cause if there is a clear and concise vision in place. Throughout history the great transformational leaders have always had a clear vision. Gandhi wanted to rid India of British rule through nonviolent resistance. Martin Luther King Jr. wanted civil rights for all people, and Mother Teresa wanted justice and compassion for the world's poorest (Northouse, 2004). These three examples of transformational leadership all have specific visions that helped transform their followers. Mentors must provide new teachers a clear concise vision by using the planning process to provide focused and consistent strategies if they are to assist in the transformational process of new teachers. Collins (2001) puts it this way: "Leadership is about vision" (pg. 34). We cannot be effective mentors without a clear vision.

The second factor in transformational leadership is to become social architects. A social architect is someone who has the ability to transform a group or organization's way of thinking to a common set of beliefs (Northouse, 2004). Northouse suggests getting people to believe in a shared sense of purpose is often the most difficult thing for a mentor to accomplish. In public education, teachers become isolated entities, and hence successful mentorship programs have incorporated shared vision as a key component to their programs to help diminish isolation. During World War II, Winston Churchill often rallied the beleaguered British people to have hope and faith in the face of overwhelming desperation. He helped transform the war effort by his leadership and his ability to get people to fight and sacrifice when they often wanted to quit. After visiting him for the last time, Dwight Eisenhower stood by his bed as Churchill was unable to speak, he raised his hand and made a "V" sign for victory. Eisenhower left the room in tears

saying, “I just said good-bye to Winston, but you never say farewell to courage” (Parachin, 2008). Eisenhower knew that much of the collective will of the British people was a reflection of their leader. Churchill was able to transform a country by getting people to think and believe in a common cause. The goal of many mentoring programs is to allow new teachers to see beyond their own vision and work collaboratively within the school.

In education one of the greatest challenges is the ability to get all parties to work for a common goal. This is where vision grows into social architecture. Not only must educational leaders share a vision, they must be able to get all parties to “buy into” this vision. Mentors can assist new teachers to go beyond changing one student’s life or one classroom; they share in the molding process and are able to affect systemic change that is effective and sustainable (Carr, Herman, & Harris, 2005).

The third key element in transformational leadership is trust. The mentor-novice teacher relationship must develop trust. When one thinks about transformational leadership one thinks of people who are trustworthy and stand on principle. They do not make excuses, they do not blame others, and their followers know where they stand. In fact, transformational leaders are committed to helping their people win (Blanchard, 1999). When someone fails, a leader accepts responsibility for that failure. True mentoring requires the mentor to have a real stake in the outcome of the new teacher. If a mentor sees each struggle as his-her own struggle and the new teacher is aware of this real support, the results are often positive. Burn’s (1978) original definition says:

...leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivation, the wants and the needs, the aspiration and expectations-of both leaders and followers. (pg. 65)

Transformational leadership speaks of the dual purpose of both leader and follower. The transforming power of trust occurs when a mentor not only acknowledges his-her own failings but sees the failing of the new teacher as his-her mistakes. People are much more willing to commit to a cause when they see their leaders as people who not only do not place themselves above their followers but also sees their successes and failures as a team effort.

Trust is a main component in transformational educational leadership and mentoring. Public education in particular has lost the trust of many of its stakeholders. The unions have long protected ineffective teachers, schools have often been hesitant to share unflattering information, and lazy administrators have made excuses for so long that we are in danger of losing the public (Schmoker, 2006). This secret, private, and protected world of teaching creates a buffer and prevents us from establishing highly effective schools and, more importantly, of establishing the much needed element of trust that will enable us to become true transformers (Schmoker, 2006). Mentors can provide true transformation when trust is developed and they model, motivate, and initiate the novice teacher to a higher ground (LeTellier, 2007). Real reform and real change, especially in the mentoring relationship, can only occur when people communicate and true communication is a byproduct of real trust (Blanchard, 1999).

The fourth key element in transformational leadership is the creative deployment of self through positive self-regard. Transformational leaders understand their strengths and avoid dwelling on their weaknesses (Northouse, 2004). This becomes an important balancing act because if it is important not to be egotistical and to show vulnerability, the mentor must also recognize the difference between showing humility and dwelling on the weaknesses of the novice teacher. Transformational leaders may have an entire set of skills that vary from leader to leader (Northouse, 2004).

In summary, understanding transformational leadership can be a key component of the mentoring process. Mentor teachers, when trained properly, supported appropriately, and properly determined, can become an instrument in the transformative development of new teachers. When vision is present and when social architecture is pursued, trust is developed, and true recognition of strengths and weaknesses are modeled and shared, a mutually beneficial and productive relationship will develop (Northouse, 2004).

Reflective Practice in Mentoring

Reflective teaching has become a greater topic of consideration for all teacher improvement. Reflection is especially important when dealing with the topic of mentoring, new teachers engage in training and development that enhances their ability to use active reflection. The mentor's responsibility is to guide and support the novice teacher. In active reflection each teacher (with the help of his-her mentor) carries out a reflective conversation in which the teacher examines lessons, artifacts, self-evaluations, and other materials and uses this process as an ongoing evaluative tool to improve instruction (Schon, 1987). This reflection in action is an interactive approach to continued professional growth (Calderhead, 1989). Reflective practice has value because the teacher focuses on and evaluates the effectiveness of how teaching methods affect student learning. This combination of examining learning theory with real life experience is critical to the new teacher experience (Pedro, 2006).

Cady, Distad, and Germundsen (1998) examined the value of reflective practice in a group setting. New teacher groups were established with the support of local colleges. Each group consisted of new teachers, mentors, and faculty members from local universities with a focus on shared reflective experiences. Their study showed a strong positive effect on new

teacher growth when participating in this process. Important aspects of the study included recognizing similar struggles of every new teacher experiences, strong mentor support, and district administrative commitment.

Critical self-reflection is an important part of the new teacher experience. Mentors teachers can help to establish this process through modeling and creating an atmosphere of trust and collaboration. Using tools such as daily journaling, routine mentor-novice meetings, and keeping track of daily occurrences can be appropriate ways to self-reflect in a manner that can be very helpful (Dyal & Sewell, 2002).

Conclusion

Mentoring programs have continued to be excellent ways to provide new teachers the support and resources they require to be more effective. These programs continue to be studied and refined to make important contributions to the induction process. Mentoring has an entire range of definitions. It has been described as meeting the needs of any new person in the building or strictly assigned to beginning teachers.

Mentoring programs have provided an entire range of supports. Some programs provide a new teacher with little more than a “go to” person, while others provide well paid, well trained mentors with additional supplemental materials. Research has shown a variety of benefits from mentor relationships. Novice teachers have noted additional confidence, professional friendship, and quicker professional development. Mentor teachers have agreed that they too have benefited from these relationships (Wollman-Bonilla, 1997).

Pelletier (2006) suggests the following five principles for effective mentoring:

1. Acknowledge who you are and what you bring to the mentoring experience.
2. Build relationships with new teachers.
3. Create opportunities for quality conversations.
4. Participate in ongoing reflection.
5. Maintain a professional community of learners.

A thorough review of the literature underscores the importance of a comprehensive mentoring program that is the foundation of new teacher induction. There does seem to be agreement that when the proper resources are made available, the proper time is taken in choosing mentors and matching them with the right novice teacher, and an appropriate understanding of adult learning styles, mentoring can have a positive impact on new teachers. Successful induction begins with having a mentoring culture (Couvier, Brandon, & Prasow, 2008). Research suggests that successful mentoring programs begin with strong leadership and collaboration (Flynn, 2008). New teacher retention and cultivation continues to be a topic of emerging research and at the forefront of school districts nationwide.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of beginning and veteran teachers regarding the effectiveness of the official mentoring program of a Northeast Tennessee school system. Specifically, the study addressed perceptions of how well this program enabled new teachers to be more prepared and whether or not the mentoring program provided the tools for mentor teachers to share their experiences with new teachers.

Mentorship is a vital and precious resource that is often underused (Mullen, 2005). Because of NCLB and increased testing accountability, school systems face increased pressure to demonstrate academic gains. Test scores are used increasingly as ways to measure teacher effectiveness (Hoy & Hoy, 2006), and school systems have turned to mentoring as one way to help new teachers become more prepared.

Because the resulting data were based on the personal experiences of a small but information-rich number of participants, the study was qualitative and used a case study design. Qualitative research is inquiry in which the researcher collects data by interacting with selected persons, it describes and analyzes individuals' thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). A case study was used because the mentoring program of Johnson City Schools is a bounded system (Merriam, 2008). It is defined by a very particular set of parameters. The study only examined those teachers who were a part of the official mentoring program of Johnson City Schools. This chapter identifies the participants and describes the data collection procedures, the interview process, and data analysis strategies.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the teacher-mentor perceptions and how the mentoring program impacted new teachers in the Johnson City School system. This study examined the various types of mentor styles, methods, and effectiveness of the overall program. Data regarding the perceptions of new teachers and their mentors were collected through interviews that sought to answer the following research questions:

1. From the perspective of new teachers, what are the key factors in developing a positive and impactful teacher mentoring program?
2. From the perspective new teachers, what have been the most difficult aspects of the mentoring program?
3. From the perspective of mentor teachers, what are the key factors in developing a positive and impactful teacher mentoring program?
4. From the perspective of mentors, what have been the most difficult aspects of the mentoring program?
5. How is this program implemented in different ways within the Johnson City School System?
6. In what ways does that difference, if any, influence the experiences of new teachers from one school to another?

Ethical Protocol

The initial consideration for ethical review is to assure that the researcher was following board approved procedures when conducting the interviews. The Policy Handbook was consulted and permission granted by the Director of Schools and the administrative supervisor in charge of the mentoring program. Identity of the participants was protected by the use of pseudonyms. It was impossible to protect the names of the people to be interviewed because they are enrolled in the official mentoring program as required by Johnson City Schools Systems; however, their responses and situations were changed to protect confidentiality. Additional considerations involved timing of the interviews, place of interviews, and signing of informed consent. There was no payment given to new teachers; however, mentor teachers receive a stipend for their participation in the mentoring program.

Before the data collection began, the study was defined and submitted for authorization from the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board to ensure all participants were protected. The ethical considerations for the document review follow standard writing ethical guidelines including the use of accurate citation, direct quotation. One final ethical consideration was to determine which documents were most important. When examining documents the researcher found there to be no distinguishable difference between Central Office and local school policy.

Data Sources

This section of Chapter 3 provides a description of the design and methods to conduct the investigation into the perceptions of how the teacher-mentor relationships impacted new teachers in the Johnson City School system. Qualitative research uses rich and descriptive language to help gain meaning and understanding. Five characteristics of a qualitative study are:

1. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed.
2. In qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.
3. Qualitative research usually involves field work.
4. Qualitative research primarily employs an inductive research strategy.
5. The final product of qualitative research is richly descriptive. (Merriam, 1998).

This study used the case study method because the phenomenon of the teacher-mentor relationship was examined within the bounded system, a very specific and single unit (Smith, 1978) of Johnson City schools.

According to Merriam (1998), “purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (pg.61). Because this case study was specific to those participating in the official mentoring program, a purposeful sample was used when gathering data (Patton, 1990).

The first criterion in choosing participants for this qualitative study was that all of the participants had to come from the Johnson City School System. All participants were involved in the official Johnson City School System’s mentoring program. The final component of the sampling process included Central Office decision makers who constructed the program in order to examine the background, development, and design of the mentoring development. This was done to help gain a greater understanding of the program goals and design. This initial interview

also helped shape the research questions used to examine the perceptions of new and mentor teachers.

The researcher submitted the request and received approval from the East Tennessee State University Internal Review Board (IRB). The IRB is established to ensure that none of the participants are harmed, their privacy protected, and that each member is provided with informed consent.

After obtaining permission from the Central Office, each new teacher was contacted via school e-mail. An initial e-mail included a description of the study and a request for permission to set up more extensive interviews. Subsequently, a list was made of willing participants who met the criteria of this study. Phone calls were made by the researcher, and direct permission was given by the participants for follow-up interviews. An initial meeting was scheduled with Central Office administrators to request permission to begin the study, discuss the scope of the study, and develop core information about the goals and direction of the mentoring program. An Interview Guide was established (see Appendix A) for these initial meetings. I attempted to use the semistructured approach that included a mix of more and less structured questions for the interview as outlined by Merriman (1998).

The interviews were conducted at the school of the participant or at a place of the participants' choosing. Choice of interview setting was important to make sure the participants felt as if they could be candid and that their privacy was protected. Efforts were made to schedule interviews at a convenient time for the participant. Every effort was made to accommodate the interviewee's schedule. Often these interviews were held directly after the completion of the work day so there would not be any additional time and travel requirements.

These meetings were held in participants' individual classrooms (when privacy permitted) or at a place of the participants choosing and were tape recorded and transcribed.

After the initial email (See Appendix E) asking for volunteers was responded to, an Informed Consent form was completed and accepted by East Tennessee State University's Internal Review Board and was presented to each interviewee before the interview occurred. Care was taken to make sure each participant signed and understood the Informed Consent Form.

Document Review

Documents were used to establish precedent of the mentoring program and a format to establish a basis for the research (See Appendix B). The researcher examined the Johnson City's School Boards' policies, minutes of relevant board meetings, and specific school based documents related to the mentoring process. Although Johnson City Schools has an established mentor program, individual schools may have additional policies that affect the implementation of the mentoring program.

Observations and Reflections

A reflection guide was developed for the documentation of observations during the interview process (see Appendix C). This documentation was used as a means for the interviewer to write reflections of the interviewee responses immediately after the interview took place. It was important to make sure that observations were recorded quickly and accurately. Every attempt was made to accurately reflect what the interviewee was communicating. Probing questions, a device in interviewing using follow-up questions, enabled the researcher to ascertain more information and delve deeper into what the interviewee was attempting to communicate.

A final consideration was to ensure that interviewer bias did not affect the recording of the observations. Because the researcher is an employee of Johnson City Schools and has participated in and mentored new teachers, an auditor and member checks were used to minimize personal biases. Researcher bias is an important component to guard against. Guba and Lincoln (1981) recognize this concern by examining ways the researcher must protect from allowing their preconceived ideas unduly affect the outcome of the research.

Several steps have been used by the researcher to ensure the control of bias. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) suggest several that were used during this research. An auditor was used to ensure that the transcript was accurately reflected. This is seen as a form of triangulation where an outside source is used to validate materials (Mathison, 1988). Member checking, where the interviewee is allowed to review the information that had been recorded for accuracy was also used.

Interview Transcripts

After obtaining authorization from the East Tennessee State University-Internal Review Board, Johnson City Schools Central Office, and building principals, each interviewee was contacted via email with a letter explaining the study. Personal interviews were conducted at a place of the interviewees choosing. To protect anonymity interview sites were chosen off school grounds when requested. An interview guide (Appendix A) was used to establish protocol. The questions were changed to reflect who was being interviewed (the mentor or new teacher) to more accurately reflect the different perspectives of each interviewee. In addition to the interview questions, the probes were used. Probes, which are skillfully asked additional

questions designed to gain further insight, were used to gain further insight or clarification (Merriam, 1998).

Two sets of teachers with previous experience in the mentor relationship were used to pretest the questions used in the data collection process to screen out awkward or poorly worded questions. These teachers agreed to participate in a mock interview to assist the researcher as questions and techniques were refined. The results of the mock interview were not included in this study.

An auditor was used for the verification of the material transcribed. All collected materials are secured in a locked, fireproof box in the researcher's home.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Each set of questions was analyzed individually after the completion of each interview to identify emerging themes and relationships developed among the pieces of data. Themes were established, interviewer's observations noted, and case records established for access (Patton, 1990). The data were coded into themes and categories to identify common characteristics. Coding was used by assigning words to particular themes to identify various pieces of information. These themes were prevalent throughout the research project (Merriam, 1998). As common themes were identified each interview was compared to all existing data to develop the conclusions presented in this research.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of new and experienced teachers regarding the mentoring program of the Johnson City School system. Johnson City Schools has recently placed greater emphasis on mentoring by providing more structure, additional training, increased reporting responsibility, and a stipend for mentors. Data were collected through interviews with 20 Johnson City School's employees. Although a script was used, follow-up questions were used to probe further meaning. Purposeful sampling was used by selecting teachers that have been mentors and new teachers involved in the official Johnson City Schools mentoring program. The research examined the perceptions of mentor and new teachers about the mentoring process developed by Johnson City Schools related to the following research questions:

1. From the perspective of new teachers, what are the key factors in developing a positive and impactful teacher mentoring program?
2. From the perspective of new teachers, what have been the most difficult aspects of the mentoring program?
3. From the perspective of mentor teachers, what are the key factors in developing a positive and impactful teacher mentoring program?
4. From the perspective of mentors, what have been the most difficult aspects of the mentoring program?
5. How has this program been implemented in different ways within the Johnson City School System?

6. In what ways does that difference, if any, influence the experiences of new teachers from one school to another?

In collecting data, the ultimate goal was to examine the perceptions of teachers of the Johnson City School's mentoring program. The focus of data analysis was to see if themes emerged as to the effectiveness of the mentoring program and suggestions for improvement in the mentoring experience for both new and experienced teachers.

The study involved 20 participants who currently are teachers in the Johnson City School System. These 20 participants were selected and asked to volunteer in this research study because they fit one of the following two criteria: (a) a beginning teacher in his or her 1st or 2nd-year of teaching who had been assigned a mentor, or (b) a veteran teacher in his or her 4th-year or more of teaching who has been a mentor teacher.

All participants were accommodating and gracious as the interviewer worked to set up face-to-face interviews. Each interview lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. Participation was voluntary and before the interviews began, the Informed Consent process was explained in detail and signed by each participant (see Appendix D). All interviews were taped and participants were assigned codes to protect their identities. After each interview, tapes were transcribed verbatim and verified by an independent IRB trained auditor. Additionally, all transcripts were reviewed by the interview subjects to verify authenticity.

The study was comprised of 11 veteran teachers and 9 new teachers. All had recently participated in the formal mentoring experience developed by Johnson City Schools. Table 1 below lists the teachers and the number of years of teaching experience.

Table 1

Participants

Participants	Gender	Experience	Mentor/New Teacher
Participant 1-Penny	Female	26 Years	Mentor
Participant 2-Sally	Female	13 Years	Mentor
Participant 3-Brenda	Female	8 Years	Mentor
Participant 4-Connie	Female	28 Years	Mentor
Participant 5- Sandi	Female	20 Years	Mentor
Participant 6-Debbie	Female	3 Years	New
Participant 7-Julie	Female	18 Years	Mentor
Participant 8-Cindy	Female	20 Years	Mentor
Participant 9-Allie	Female	2 Years	New
Participant 10-Rebecca	Female	5Years	New
Participant 11-Lena	Female	5 Years	New
Participant 12-Tina	Female	2 years	New
Participant 13-Maria	Female	5 Years	New
Participant 14-Nina	Female	12 Years	Mentor
Participant 15-Tonya	Female	15 Years	Mentor
Participant 16-Sara	Female	4 Years	New
Participant 17-Callie	Female	2 Years	New
Participant 18-Mona	Female	33 Years	Mentor
Participant 19-Amy	Female	15 Years	Mentor
Participant 20-Natalie	Female	2 Years	New

Themes

Eight themes were identified as being either positive or negative aspects of the mentoring process. These themes were: (a) relationships, (b) common planning time, (c) similar personality styles, (d) teaching practices, (e) program structure, (f) support system, (g) classroom organization and management, and (h) equal learning opportunities.

Positive Relationships

Mentor Teachers

One of the most prevalent themes that emerged from the interviews was the strong relationships that were developed through the mentoring program. Many stated that their relationships continued after the official mentoring processes were finished. Many of the experienced teachers shared how instrumental these relationships became.

Penny, a veteran 5th grade teacher of 28 years, was very pleased with the professional and personal relationship she established with her new teacher. She stated:

“I have a very positive relationship with my new teacher. We have become very good friends and are very compatible. We have the same values and the same work ethic.... I think if there was a conflict it would be very difficult to work with because it would take a lot more effort on your part.”

Sally, a 13 year kindergarten teacher, said it this way:

“We became very close. We worked together so much and as we did we realized that we had so much in common. We worked together so much and I think it was a real benefit to have her directly across the hall from my classroom.”

Sandi, a 20 year veteran teacher, became excited when she spoke about the last mentor relationship she had. Sandi has had the opportunity to mentor many new teachers over the years and feels as if some of her strongest relationships professionally and personally have come from professional mentoring. She said of her last relationship:

“Fabulous she was open, she asked questions constantly. She’s still asking questions I stayed with her yesterday till five thirty almost six o’clock and she’s not a brand new teacher she was a veteran teacher who left teaching for thirteen years to have children and came back and was very nervous about it and just had lots of questions. She would call me and I gave her my home number and my cell number and we came in early and stayed late and just asked a lot of questions and I was thrilled to work with her and it’s just that our relationship has no boundaries really [we are] not afraid to ask the question and that willingness to learn.”

Mona, a 33 year veteran, related how she has developed mostly positive relationships with the teachers she has mentored. She said that as colleges and universities have become more aware of needs of the teaching profession: new teachers arrive more receptive to learning. Mona mentioned this as a fundamental shift in how relationships can grow through the mentoring process. In the past she said teachers were often seen as separate entities working in isolation. New teachers have a much greater emphasis on collaborative learning thus helping develop stronger relationships. Of her last mentor relationship she said:

“We are very close. It’s always nice to have somebody come in with new blood and give you lots of new ideas. It is a give and take thing and I think it’s important that you don’t as a mentor you don’t think you have all the answers. It is important not to intimidate a new teacher you want to allow them their ownership to allow them flexibility offer suggestions but if they don’t take it you can’t personally. I think that makes for a better relationship.”

Amy, a 13 year veteran teacher, talked about how trust had been an important part of the relationship. Amy said her good personal relationship aided in the development of her professional relationship. She stated that she has had good professional relationships that did

not always cross over personally and personal relationships that had developed through teaching but did not always continue professionally. In her last mentor relationship she expressed:

“It was a good relationship, it was a relationship if they had a question they could ask me openly and they could trust and depend on me. After that person already had a job they still call me and that’s what I want. They can still call me and ask for things if they need. It is not really personal but a teacher relationship to where they ask me questions about the teaching profession.”

Brenda, an 8 year veteran teacher, noted how the relationship that she had developed had continued even though they had been moved to different grade levels. She said:

“Oh, we became really good friends and still and are to this day. It was a really good way to start a relationship and a friendship and we’ve maintained it and exchanged information back and forth even though they got moved to a different grade level the next year. We are very close.”

New Teachers

The new teachers also expressed a great deal of appreciation for the relationships that were established. Natalie, a second year teacher, was assigned to a different school from her where she was mentored said:

“It turned out wonderful. I love my mentor she was awesome both in the classroom and out she was willing to help me with anything that I needed. I still call her today when I need help.”

Tina, a new teacher with 5 years experience, came to Johnson City from another system. This was the first time she had experienced a mentor and stated the similarities in personalities helped as they developed their relationship. She said:

“I feel like we both had similar personalities and outlooks on teaching I felt like my mentor was a hard worker so I feel like I am a hard worker so we both had that in common.” That commonality helped them develop an excellent mentoring experience when later she stated: “I feel like I had the perfect mentoring experience. I don’t think there was anything [left out]she covered all the basis and then I felt like if I needed something else I could just go and ask her. I don’t think I would even say that there was something missing from it.”

Debbie, a new teacher with 3 years experience, summed up her relationship with her mentor by simply saying. “She was great!” She talked about how their relationship allowed her to feel more confident. It was this confidence in each other that allowed her to make it through one of the most stressful parts, the evaluations, of the new teacher experience. She said:

“She was wonderful! She helped me with anything I needed especially the biggest...biggest...biggest part was the evaluations. She was able to tell me exactly what I needed, show me paper, and show me examples of stuff she had done which helped tremendously. Because they give you this huge thing and it’s a lot and you’re thinking how am I going to get this done. She made sure that everything [was done correctly], she looked over everything for me and made sure it was exactly how it needs to be.

Allie, a new teacher with 2 years experience, was entering a second career as a teacher. Even though she had been very successful in her first endeavor, she was not totally prepared

for what was expected for her as a teacher. She stated the strong relationship she developed with her mentor was crucial. She said:

“She’s was always ready to help and she’s one of these people that can multi-task so she can be in the middle of a question and she’s somebody who’s always there. She was very positive about my style of teaching and encouraged me to be who I was or who I am as a teacher but if I ever had questions or concerns she would always give me advice then and then I would take that advice and use it or bits of pieces [she is a] great mentor and a great friend.”

Maria, a new teacher with 3 years experience, also came from another system that did not provide mentors for new teachers. She stated the relationship she established with her mentor helped her make the transition to a new state. She not only helped her transition into a new school but also became her first friendship in an area where she had no ties. She said:

“I do [feel like we have a good relationship] she was actually the first friend that I really met here because she was the first person I had to talk to I don’t have problems meeting people but like I said being here being new she was the first friend I made and we developed a relationship that carried on outside of work as well which was good.”

Sara, a new teacher with 4 years experience, had both a positive and negative experience when she was assigned mentors. Because she had been assigned to a different school within the same system, she had the unique experience of having an assigned mentor in two schools. Of her first mentorship she said:

“My [first] assigned mentor provided me with nothing so therefore we had no relationship. It was not all her fault, I was outside in a modular class and we were not very close in proximity. So it was much easier for me to get what I needed from the person I sought out. The teacher I

sought out was not an official mentor but we had much more similar personalities and a much better relationship.”

Her relationship was far better in the new school. She stated:

“She was really helpful. She taught right across the hall from me so I was close to her which was helpful. I’ve had mentors before that were further away in the building so it was helpful that she was right across the hall. We taught the same grade level. I also had mentors that were in a different grade level which was hard. We had planning together and we also just kind of clicked. She helped me with day to day school things but we also had similar teaching styles which I think help in the long run if you are going to continue your relationship later on. I think it helps if you and the other person see eye to eye on what you are teaching.”

Negative Relationships

Mentor Teachers

Although the majority of those interviewed were very positive about the relationships established through the mentoring process, there were some negatives. Tonya, a teacher with 15 years experience, had the most negative response. She had been involved with many positive mentoring experiences in the past, but her last mentoring assignment was so negative that she asked to be transferred to a new school because she felt she was not supported by the administration in her efforts to mentor. When asked about her last experience she sighed and said:

“I don’t really know what the deal was. I think I enjoyed teaching more than she did and so I think my being appalled by her negative attitude in such a early date may have taken me back

a little bit to where that might have built a little bit of a wall between us. I've tried not to let that show let them try to work around that a little bit I think just given my personality being pretty much this is how it is. I think that probably affected it [the relationship] a little bit until this wasn't a person who felt like they could reach out to. I felt like they thought if they were reaching out to somebody then that meant that they didn't know what they needed to know so they weren't as willing to take help or ask for help because I think they should have given the fact that they really didn't know what they were doing."

The chasm grew so wide that the two were not even able to complete the 25 hours required by Johnson City Schools in the mentoring contract. Tonya continued:

"I did [have trouble getting the 25 hours in] with the last mentor because she wasn't willing to sit down and meet her obligations. She was always gone in the mornings, gone during planning and left right after school so it was very hard for me to find the time. I would stick my head in and say is there something that I can help you with and that would take probably 2 minutes and her response was no I am ok was pretty much we had a difficult time with that log. As a matter of fact, I wasn't able to complete it and I put on there we tried to meet the certain amount of time but that didn't work."

Connie, a veteran teacher with 28 years experience, had a different reason for her negative relationship with her new teacher. She said she liked her personally but said she was put in a difficult position when it became apparent that the teacher was not going to have her contract renewed and thus not be rehired the next year. She kept asking her for information. Connie stated she was in the uncomfortable situation of trying to continue the mentoring process even though she knew the new teacher was not going to be rehired. She said:

“Once it became apparent that she was not going to be renewed. There was at times a sense of betrayal. I felt as if she thought that I did not go to bat for her and because of that our relationship suffered.”

New Teachers

Callie, a new teacher with 2 years experience, was 39 years old when she started the profession. She stated strongly that her mentor was not meeting her needs and the requirements of the program. Not wanting it to become an unworkable situation because they were on the same grade level she notified her administrator. She said:

“We did not continue the mentoring program. There actually came a point when I realized that we were going to need to sit down and discuss what we had done hour wise and how we met and I was uncomfortable about that. I didn’t want to make waves with the situation with a colleague that I was suppose to be working with and wanted to have a good relationship so I did go to the principal [and] gave a her a heads up that we are not really meeting in this way and I really didn’t want to be put on the spot.”

Callie was comforted by the administrator’s discretion and said her administrator avoided a potentially negative situation without the mentor being aware of the source of the concern. She reported the administrator went to the mentor teacher and dissolved the contract without damaging the relationship between the mentor teacher and new teacher. Callie expressed appreciation because her administrator kept their conversations confidential. When asked if she still received the help she needed she said:

“Right and it was not honestly where I felt like no one would help me. I felt like if that was the case I would have gone a long time ago kicking and screaming please somebody help me out

but I never felt like that. There were always people that I could ask and people that were very willing but as far as a formal structure or sit down mentoring and meeting that was not happening. I felt like before I got put in a position I had to speak up. I felt as if I was ratting somebody out that we were not doing what I felt was needed. I had to just bring it up behind the scenes and it actually dissolved in a very good way to where there were not bad feelings. I don't think my mentor knows that I did that. I hope not. It worked out well in the end.”

All 20 respondents to the interview stated that relationships are an integral part of the mentoring process. Most had positive experiences in their most recent relationships. What was clear from the results was that how these relational experiences left a dramatic impression on all involved.

Common Planning Time

Another strong theme that emerged was the need for common planning time. Common planning time is defined as a common time during the school day when mentors and new teachers could meet and plan together for the week. Nineteen of the 20 people interviewed stated that common planning time as a vital part of the mentoring program.

Mentor Teachers

Tonya expressed the value of common planning time even though when she started her career she sought help from experienced teachers in different grade levels. She seemed to sum up the thoughts of most participants when she said:

“ [Common planning time is important]Because I think each different grade level has a different set of circumstances.... not entirely just a small percentage of things like there may be

things that are specific to each grade level as far as development goes or as far as the curriculum goes. I think it helps but I didn't have a mentor where I was before but I knew when I first started that there were teachers who taught other grades that were higher than mine I did feel like I could go to and just say can you stop and help me for just a second and they were able to help me from their perspective. It would have been really nice if I would have had someone in my grade level that would have more specific information for that age group.”

Sally said:

“I am just not sure how you could do it [mentoring] effectively without a common planning period. I wish we had more time during the day to plan together. My person and I spent so much time after school and that was OK because that was part of who we were but for most people you need that time during school. I am sure it can be done but I would not want to mentor someone without having common planning time with them.”

Cindy, when asked if she thought common planning time was important, said:

“I think so because you can ask right then you don't have to wait. When we have shared planning time shared lunch time shared playground time there are more opportunities to talk even though you cannot log or document that time there still able to touch base throughout the day each day.”

Sandi was even more emphatic. When asked if she thought that common planning time was an important part of the success of her most recent mentoring relationship she said, “Yes! Most definitely!” She went on to say that she it would be important to everyone. She said,

“[Common planning should be used for everyone] I know it might be hard for special teachers where there is not another one in the school. But possibly it would help if they were paired with a special teacher from another school....I just believe it is that important.”

Connie, who has worked with many new teachers, has worked both ways but said common planning is much more effective. She said.

“[When asked if it was more effective to have common planning]”I did because I knew the curriculum forwards and backwards. I didn’t have to say well this is the way I do it in my classroom but if you are teaching fifth I am not sure how they would do it there wasn’t any second guessing. I could share what worked for me.”

Lena, a 15 year veteran teacher, described having a new teacher with common planning period as practical because of proximity. She noted that teachers are often geographically grouped by grade levels, classes on the same grade level are often located in close proximity, therefore making access to each other much more plausible if you share the grade with your mentor teacher. Lena said:

“Extremely important [to have common planning] even proximity. My mentee was just two little areas down the hall which doesn’t sound like a lot but as a teacher you can sometimes not even make it to the office much less down the hall. So yes I think it is very important.”

Penny seemed to be the most adamant about the need to have a common planning time. She talked about how important it was for the day to day responsibilities of teaching but even suggested the system go one step further by, “have[ing] maybe 1 day a month or something like that where you could meet with other mentors to talk about things that they’re doing at their

schools or just all of us to get together and just do some more common...to have more common planning with other people at other schools as well as with the person that you are mentoring.”

New Teachers

New teachers also stated the importance of common planning time.

Tina added:

“Because if you are not in the same grade level then you won’t have as many things to talk about and if you are then of course your going to say hey this came up you can talk about whatever comes up. I think that they know more about what you are going through if they are in the same grade level and have a common planning period.”

Debbie, when asked about common planning, emphatically said:

[Is it important?] “100% yes! Because you can get help throughout the year with your standards and with your teaching, with different centers and with classroom ideas because you have the same age of kids. You are doing a lot of the same things and getting ideas on good ways [to do things] because obviously every grade level is different. It is wonderful to be able to get with somebody that is teaching the same exact grade you are even though it is different kids but that has taught it for several years and knows the ins and outs and things that work especially things that don’t work so I think that is a good thing.

The concept of same grade level often merged with common planning period. Many of the interviewees talking about the need of knowing the standards and curriculum associated with their mentors.

Maria said common planning was important because:

“[I] definitely do... because like I said we met every day and that’s partly why we were on the same grade level we had common planning if we didn’t I mean it would probably be more e-mail and not a everyday thing.”

Natalie agreed:

“I think having her on the same grade level helped. I also feel where I am now I have people that are being my mentor but I feel like it does help [even though they are not on the same grade level] but I feel like there is only so much they can do in the times they have”

Sara recalled why the first mentor experience did not work, she noted:

“The person that I went and found to be my mentor [not the assigned mentor] was also new to the school but not new to teaching and she had taught for many years but was assigned a mentor herself just for school going on and things like that. But we were next to each other outside of the building in portable classrooms and our mentors where inside so it really was kind of hard it wasn’t her fault she didn’t know what to tell me yeah know occasionally she would tell me things about fire drills stuff like that but I would go and ask but the lady that I was next door to [she] really helped me the most and she helped me really learn to teach and run a first grade room.”

The theme continued throughout the interviews. Teachers stress the importance of specific time, each day, which allowed professional contact with coworkers. Although the mentoring program requires contact hours that are outside of the regular teaching day, this daily contact was seen as vital.

Similar Personality Styles

Mentor Teachers

Personality styles were another emerging theme that was identified by many of the interviewees. Twelve of the interviewees mentioned it as an important component to successful mentoring while 4 made no mention at all. Four respondents referred to personality styles but said they were either not significant or they played a negative role in their mentoring.

Penny claimed it made her job as a mentor much easier when there were similar personality styles. She stated:

“It [similar styles] made it much easier for me to be her mentor because she and I are very well organized and I think you do have to have someone who is compatible someone that has the same values that you have and the commitment that you have. I think it is very frustrating if you don’t have that kind of person to work with because it does take a lot of energy and effort on your part as a teacher if they do not have the same style as you.”

Sally agreed by saying, “We became good friends and we spent so much time together and found out that we had a lot in common and our personalities worked well together.”

Cindy said it was a natural. She stated, “Of course if you like the person you are working with or you have similar styles it makes the job easier. If you look at kids on the playground they often migrate to those that have similar interest. So it is natural.”

New Teachers

Lena spoke enthusiastically when she shared how she and her mentor clicked right away, she said:

“The mentor that I have here has been wonderful we clicked right away we are still friends. I mean it was almost a perfect match I don’t know how it happened but it did. We communicated the same way, we talked the same way, we had the same type of environment in our own classrooms going on and that was wonderful. My mentor and I in my old place didn’t talk much, we were two different types of personalities, two different grade levels and if I had a question about anything more[I was]likely to go to somebody that is in my grade level than that mentor at my old school.”

Tina stated that she and her mentor’s similar personality styles made it easier because they shared a common work ethic. She said, “I do I feel like we both had similar personalities and outlooks on teaching I felt like my mentor was a hard worker so I feel like I am a hard worker so we both had that in common.”

Rebecca indicated that she was relieved. She commented, “When I realized we had a lot in common it just seemed to make the job that much easier. I mean it was not a struggle to have to act like you liked someone. So it seemed to me it was just one less hurdle that we had to cross.”

Differences in Personality Styles

Mentor Teachers

Even though most of those interviewed shared how they had positive experiences because of they had similar personality styles, some were indifferent and a few even saw differences as strength.

Nina expressed how different personality styles could be positive, she said:

“Maybe to an extent[personality styles are important], but I think overall because as I’ve had a mentor teacher for myself when I started out and we had very different personalities but she let me see that are many different ways to do things and opened my eyes up to a few different ways. So I feel like that’s not as important I mean make sure the fundamentals are there but I feel like they don’t have to have the same type of personality.”

Tonya, whose last experience ended with a request for transfer, talked painfully of how her love for learning and desire to be positive resulted in forming a wall that inhibited the mentoring relationship from growing. Tonya said if their personality styles had been matched better with greater administrative oversight the situation may not have ended negatively.

Interestingly, Connie stated a potential improvement to the system would be to allow for flexibility within the mentoring process. She stated when there were personality differences significant enough to disrupt the relationship both members would benefit from a change of placement.

New Teachers

Debbie was encouraged by her mentor’s belief in her even though they had different personalities. She stated:

“We had completely different personalities but she embraced everything I think that I have a different style just because we have different personalities but she completely embraced that and helped me. Even though she had taught for so many years, being able to see her perspective and saying that if I was going to this...this is how I would do it because you know I would bring her stuff and say this is what I really want to do... I want to do this unit...it is

going to take me four weeks...what you think? And she could say well you know with your teaching I think you need to know have more centers set up.”

Debbie recognized that just because they had different personalities and styles it was not a negative, in fact it allowed both new teacher and mentor to see things from different perspectives.

One of the new teachers had negative responses to the issue of similar personality styles.

Sara, who became visibly irritated, said:

“It was easy for me this time because of the person I was with[had similar personality styles] but I have been other places that that would have been near impossible just because I really wouldn’t need to talk to that person that much and I actually wouldn’t want them in my space for that long. We had very different personality styles so whenever they would have advice in teaching they would have to give me I wouldn’t want to listen. It would be a waste of time to sit down and nod my head and pretend to listen because she was too wrapped up in what they were doing to bother with me that it made a difference. It made me feel welcome to be paired up with somebody that I got along with well because I’ve been at other schools where I wouldn’t have wanted to stay and I think that helps when you have someone that you go to.”

Teaching Practices

Mentor Teachers

Similar to the issue of similar personality styles is how mentors and new teachers establish their styles of teaching. It was interesting to examine how directive the different mentors were when it came to teaching styles. New teachers also talked about the freedom to

develop their own styles especially as they became more confident. Penny gave a typical response when she noted the 1st-year teacher assigned to her initially followed her style but became more and more confident as the year continued, she said:

“I think at the beginning she pretty much kind of followed suit at the way I did things and how we had done things at our grade level. But as she got more comfortable then I wanted her input more and she was very good about doing that but she always wanted to check with me to make sure it was OK. It was wonderful as a veteran teacher to get new input on things. But she wanted to have some input; she wanted to try new things, which was very good for me because as a veteran teacher you know you are always looking for new and different ways to present things.”

Brenda’s assigned teacher was new to the system but not new to the profession so she stated it made her job easier. She said:

“She did not [need a lot of teaching direction]...which was a total difference when I had others who had not had any teaching experience and that was totally different starting point.”

Sally specifically tried to be very directive in the beginning because the new teacher assigned to her had no previous experience. She stated:

“This was her very first teaching experience so I would pretty much lay out on the table for her and I gave her the option that she could do her own thing or she could do as I did. And I think because it was her first experience teaching she went my way and then as she has worked a number of months then she was able to work on her own a little bit more.”

Julie said:

“I always want people to learn their own styles. But I think it is natural to try and do what you have seen. I never ask new teachers to follow my style but they often do and as they begin to come into their own they start to add their own perspective.”

Connie left teaching styles up to the new teachers by saying:

“Well I always tell them across the board ultimately there are several ways to skin a cat but the bottom line is here is what my children have to know how to present it and how what they do to obtain these objectives. You know you can all the freedom of expression that you want. Teachers that are a little more unsure of themselves will mimic almost everything that I do from discipline to what activities do I have but the ones that have more self confidence will take it and run with it and they truly do their own little style.”

Tonya agreed with the need to give new teachers the opportunities to explore possible different teaching practices but also to make new teachers aware of their responsibilities by saying:

“I’ve tried to give them as much freedom as possible because I never know. I usually tend to let somebody come me because I am always afraid that if I come to them first I might be giving them information that they don’t want or don’t need. I am afraid that they might be misinterpreting that as me trying to tell them what to do so I usually wait for somebody ask me and I more than happy to help. I don’t expect them to mimic me at all. I feel like you have to do you have to pretty much do what best fits your personality .But [you need to be] there to offer. I may say here are my ideas and you are more than welcome to use it. I know different people are different in their teaching styles.”

Mona spoke of the need to make sure new teachers embraced their own teaching practices. She expressed how this helped new teachers avoid feeling less successful if they failed at trying to replicate their mentor styles. She said:

“And if they try to do something that I am doing and it doesn’t work I don’t want them to feel like they are a failure at or they stink at that. Just because it works for me doesn’t mean it’s going to work for you. The key is if this doesn’t work you fine find something that does but it’s important to have a plan in place.”

Amy took a stronger stand. She stated there were certain things that needed to be done and she would let new teachers know. She said:

“I think it’s because I’m older I don’t know (laugh) but I am very directive and these are things you need to watch for and do. I say things like that you can do what you want to but these are my suggestions and this is my advice you can take it or leave it but I do give my opinion.”

New Teachers

The new teachers all mentioned they had the freedom to express their own styles. Debbie was especially appreciative when she recalled how her mentor showed confidence in her. She said:

“We just had such different personalities that led to our very different teaching styles. But even though she had a more traditional approach she would always offer suggestions on what I might try with the way I attempted to teach my class. She was always there for me but she in no way tried to impose her style on me. She was a great mentor.”

Tina said she had the freedom to express her own views but also tried to use the best of what her mentor had to offer. She stated:

“I feel like she gave me the freedom [to express my own teaching style] I also felt like she sort of showed me her style and I kind of took to her style because I liked it but I felt like I had the freedom. I just learned through her I tried to mimic her style but I tweaked it.”

Rebecca said:

“I know I could do whatever I wanted but I just felt I needed to run it by my mentor. I know we were pretty similar and that was great but I think I felt more confident to experiment as the year went on.”

Natalie, the youngest of all the teachers interviewed, showed the progression that most of the mentors teachers hoped for. She said:

“At first I mimicked her style I definitely did just because it’s a new classroom and you didn’t really know. I didn’t really know who they were so I definitely mimicked her style I’d say the first month or so. She never really offered she just kind of did it and I just followed and then after awhile I did it on my own and still followed her procedures. We both had similar teaching styles but I felt more and more comfortable doing my own thing throughout the year”

Allie stated that because she and her mentor’s teaching styles were so close it never became an issue. She said:

“There was never any type of imposition. My teaching style and her teaching style were very similar. There were obviously things that we did differently but the basic way we handled a class or our basic teaching philosophies were very similar. But when there were times that I

had a different take on things she was very supportive. I believe it is one of the attributes that made her such a great mentor, she was willing to help in any way but also comfortable enough to let me do things the way I needed to when we differed.”

Program Structure

Every interviewee was asked questions about the structure of the mentoring program. The interviewer wanted to gain greater insight into the participants’ views of the amount of time required, the reflective logs, and the flexibility of the program. This was an attempt to gain insight in each participant’s view of how a successful mentoring program is developed. Because Johnson City Schools has a structured program required for all mentors and new teachers, it was important to this study to see how those interviewed perceived the effectiveness of the structure.

Mentor Teachers

The most notable response from 18 of the 20 participants was that the time requirement was very easily accomplished. The mentor program required 25 hours to be logged in 5-hour segments after each 9 weeks. This had to be logged outside the normal work day. The only two who had difficulty meeting the time requirement were Tonya and Callie, both of whom had their mentorship contracts terminated. Sally, a self-proclaimed workaholic, laughed when asked if the 25 hours was difficult to obtain. She shared that she and her latest mentor probably accomplished the time requirements in the first 2 weeks of schools.

Connie agreed the time required was easy to meet. She did state it was difficult to log it the appropriate way because so much of when you would meet might be in bits and pieces. She said:

“If you have to sit down and slot hours by hours it might be difficult because sometime you might have 30 minutes here and 15 there and it’s difficult to keep the paper work for all the different little times during the day. It’s great if you can meet after school once a week for a couple of hours.”

Penny was like most interviewees, she was not even sure of the exact number of hours required. She was sure that she needed more time and far exceeded her time requirements. She said:

“Well of course [I wish I had] more time. I mean I don’t think you ever have enough time. We did a lot of things together after school as well. We talked mainly long term goals. I am really not sure (laughs) how many hours I had to get but we went way beyond that. I mean I did not even think about being a mentor at that time I was trying to help her out she was helping me out and we would make plans to do things with our class to make it the best possible year for our students.”

Julie added:

“It just is not that difficult to get twenty five hours. I know to some people that seems a lot but it really is not when you think about it. And that is just what you get outside of the normal day. The structure of the program has some accountability and I think that is a good thing.”

Nina agreed:

“I just think the structure is about right. You do not want to put so many requirements on it that there is no flexibility but it is important to have some way to track hours.”

Mona was much more concerned with the quality of hours than she was the quantity. Mona expressed how different people required different amounts of time. A much better use of time structure would be to journal meaningful experiences. She stated:

“I don’t really think it has to be that structured. If [you do decide to structure} you should have those involved write up an evaluation or journal. Some people can put in hours and hours but it doesn’t mean that they are really getting anywhere while others are much more organized and can put in half the time and accomplish so much more. The key is not the hours spent but rather what is learned during the process. I realize there needs to be some time requirements but it should be more focused on what you learn and not what [time] you spend.”

Cindy agreed:

“No the time and structure was easy for us. I was in the same pod and anytime she had a question she’d just walk across the hall. We also met each Monday after school for an hour because we were told that it had to be after school time that it couldn’t be during the day for the purpose of documentation. We talked during the day but to get our hours documented it was always after school. If we knew that she had a long list of questions we would just go to Starbuck’s and stay for a couple of hours there.”

New Teachers

New teachers also agreed that the time requirements were easily met. Maria laughed when asked if it was difficult. She said, “No we well (laugh) we exceed those hours. Like I said we met every day and I mean one hour a month that’s what it was I mean we would do that in a day so we exceed those hours by far.”

Tina, who mimicked her mentor’s exhaustive work habits, agreed:

“After school she would be here on weekends and we would meet. She would call me so we didn’t actually have a set time we met. We always met on Wednesdays during our grade group meeting but she would usually get with me after school almost daily. It was not uncommon for us to spend 10 hours a week after school or on the weekends working on school. Even though it was not always official mentor responsibilities, I was always learning.”

Sara referenced the personal relationship that allowed her to accomplish the time requirements of the program. She said:

“It was easy for me [to get my hours in] this time because of the person who mentored me. I liked her very much so that made all the time we spent together go by very quickly.”

When the structure of the program was discussed, the most common theme that emerged was the documentation of hours. Little or no mention was made to any of the other components of the program. Most mentor teachers mentioned an initial meeting with the Central Office supervisor who discussed some ideas on mentoring and passed out the paperwork, but most of the actual mentoring process was left to the individual teachers.

Support System

One of the strongest themes to emerge from the interviews was the strong sense of support that was nurtured through the mentoring program. New teachers were especially grateful when they realized how accessible and helpful their mentors were.

New Teachers

Tina began to smile as she spoke of all the support provided for her. She said:

“She would help me every week. We would sit down during grade group meetings and then sometimes during the weekends she would even call and make sure I had everything. She offered to share her lesson plans with me and basically just help me out in every aspect of teaching in my first year. I felt like I could go to her for anything I needed and she would be there.”

Natalie agreed by saying:

“I would say that having the mentor there and being able to go her every for anything. If I needed help with doing a lesson and I wasn’t sure how to address it the way they [the administration] wanted to we would always try to go from a different angle and she just helped me in anyway I needed both personally and in the classroom.”

Callie, even though she had her formal mentoring discontinued, mentioned that the support of those around her was instrumental in having a successful first year. She stated,

“There were always people that I could ask and people that were very willing and shared. I asked or sometimes they volunteered.”

Sara expressed that the initial encouragement she received help foster a strong and long lasting support network.

“I don’t think that it matters to either one of us that one has taught for a long time and the other hasn’t. I go pick her brain all the time about different topics even though we aren’t the same grade level anymore she is always there to support me.”

Debbie, who noted how different her mentor’s style was from her own, indicated that she was always supported:

“I don’t think I realized then how helpful all of the support I received was. My mentor continues to this day to talk to me and be a close personal support. Sometimes it takes time to fully appreciate all that has been done for you.”

Maria said her mentor was one of the first relationships she developed when she moved to Johnson City. This personal relationship continued after the mentorship was completed and developed into a much needed support. She explained:

“Even though the mentorship only lasted for one year officially, she has continued to help me along the way. When you move from one state to another and know almost no one, it is important to surround yourself with people who care about you. My mentor switched schools, and although we do not get to see each other on a daily basis, I know she is always there for me. She sends me text messages and encourages me. I know if I ever needed anything she would be there for me in a moment.”

Allie agreed:

“I was lucky enough to be rehired and the first person to congratulate me was my mentor. Now in my second year as a teacher we still work very closely together. She has been a support for me as a teacher but more importantly she has provided me with personal support. It is such a blessing to come to work with people every day that you know have your best interest in mind every day.”

Lena stated all the long hours help to forge a lasting support:

“When you stay after school with someone every day and you talk on the phone to all hours of the night, you are either going to become very close or you will not be able to stand

each other (laughs). I was lucky enough to have a wonderful mentor who still supports me today.”

Mentor Teachers

It was clear to see that support was viewed by both mentor and new teacher as an important component of mentoring. The experienced teachers often stated they received as much as they gave. Sally expressed it this way:

“[The support was] most definitely it was a two way street I was able to share with her and as she became more comfortable she would help me. She was always excited about teaching and sometimes as a veteran teacher it is nice to have someone around that reminds you why you decided to do this job in the first place.”

Penny agreed:

“I think because our styles were so similar and that she had come from a previous career. It was so easy to see her as someone I could trust. Early on, all new teachers are just trying to survive, but as they start to look around and realize they can do the job, they begin to share more. I was just very fortunate to have someone who I knew I could count on.”

Brenda, a first time mentor, was grateful that she and her mentee worked so well together. She stated:

“I was nervous at first because I had never done this before. I wanted to make sure I did everything I was supposed to do and she just made my job so easy. Not only did we match well from a personality standpoint, but I also knew I could count on her for help if I needed. She had already taught previously in another system so therefore I gained as much knowledge as I

gave. Our planning sessions were not just me telling her things she needed to know, it was a genuine exchange of ideas.”

Sandi talked about the many different ways being a mentor has helped her:

“It is just so great to see the enthusiasm that new teachers bring. I have had a lot of new teachers to work with because our school has a very difficult population but they almost always renew me with their joy. I have had opportunities where I have met with new teachers in groups and with individuals and I almost always feel as if there are new things for me to learn. When you have done it as long as I have and you continue to build upon those relationships, you develop quite a strong network of support. There are several people that I have mentored that I count as my closest friends and I know they will always support me. They already do.”

Mona simply commented:

“It is like any relationship, the more you nurture it the more you will get out of it. You can’t just expect any relationship to grow without work on both sides. So yes, I have felt supported but I have felt the most support from the relationships that I have worked at the most.”

Connie echoed that sentiment when she said:

“After all these years, still some my greatest support comes from those I have mentored. Maybe it is because you invest so much time early on. Maybe it is because you see their failure as your failure but the bottom line is, I am a much better teacher because of these experiences.”

Amy said the greatest strength of the program was that mentors and new teachers were required to get to know each other on a more intimate level;

“In some ways it is a sink or swim situation. I know it is not set up to be that but when you spend a lot of time with people you either learn to deal with them or you are miserable. I have never had a bad relationship with anyone assigned to me. I am sure we have had disagreements but that is true anywhere. I say we are a family, we will not always agree on everything but in the end we need to support each other. I have always tried to do that and I know I have felt supported.

The most negative statement regarding support came from Tonya. When she observed that it was apparent her assigned teacher was not doing what was required of her, she said she was obligated to report to the administration. When the administration refused to address the situation, she expressed her dissatisfaction.

“It was a very difficult decision for me to ask for a transfer. I loved (name of school). But I could not, in all honesty, work for an administrator that would say one thing and do another. We ask children everyday to live up to expectations and we don’t demand it from ourselves it is unacceptable. I am happy where I am, I just wish it did not have to come to this.”

Classroom Organization and Time Management

The issue of how well prepared new teachers are as they enter the profession was very important to this study. If all the respondents felt they had inadequate academic preparation it would certainly affect the overall structure of a mentoring program. Because the participants of this study came from a variety of academic backgrounds and various levels of experience it was important to see if any specific gaps in academic preparedness were noted. Most respondents said teacher training institutions continue to provide adequate if not excellent preparation. The most common problem noted was the ability to replicate a real life teaching experience. Even

though every school program has a student teacher component, the consensus was that there is just no way to totally prepare new teachers for the rigors of the profession.

Mentor Teachers

Penny said:

“It just takes a lot of time and it is a big commitment and even though the person that I mentored, she had very good work ethic but still I don’t think she realized what all was involved in becoming a teacher just outside of the curriculum. She was academically prepared but it takes so much time.”

Tonya agreed with the need for a strong knowledge of the curriculum when she said:

“Really I think it was probably knowing what the curriculum is and knowing different ways to teach it. Having somebody there if you are having problems with the curriculum and having somebody you can go to whether its problems just knowing what to teach or knowing how to get through the day.”

Connie expressed a common theme when she stated:

“The biggest concerns that I would have, would probably be time management. Schools just can’t prepare you for that. There are just so many things that teachers have to do now. Sometimes when you are student teaching you’ve got the supervising teacher and your classroom teacher to help out with those things now when you are the real teacher you don’t realize all the little things that take time. It would just be time management for them and discipline, discipline is big because if you don’t have your kids listening or focused they can’t learn.”

When asked to further clarify, she commented:

“Probably discipline I have seen more young teachers come in and with [the way] society and parents are sometimes they are afraid to be too firm so I think that one would be discipline would have to be a very important factor.”

Sandi agreed that behavior management is a key to being a successful teacher but also added a need to understand the particular school’s culture:

“As they start their profession the new teachers [need] a lot of behavior management and curriculum, learning the new curriculum in the school system. Getting to know the school culture is important because I think each school culture, and I’ve been a mentor at different schools, is so different and learning those specific needs in that school and those children those families. I think it is really difficult because where they may come from is totally different than what the school they are working in and that plays into the behavior management as well. Colleges and universities just can’t totally prepare you for that.”

It is these extra aspects about the profession that concerned Brenda:

“Their preparedness.... Sometimes I think teachers come with a natural inclination to teach and sometimes people have that and sometimes they don’t. I wanted to gage whether the person I was going to be working with was going to be an individual that you have to spell A B C D E F G out for him or is it going to be one that you know can just naturally pick it up and do it. They may come from the exact same program but still have different abilities levels so it is up to me as a mentor to determine where they are.”

Mona also said new teachers were academically prepared:

“I feel academically they’re coming in prepared but the logistics of organizing activities, time frames, pacing guides and getting kids to their expectations takes a lot more experience. That’s something you really have to jump in with both feet and that’s one of the hardest things to do in the beginning.”

Amy, a former resource teacher, had a unique answer to the question:

“Working with diversity is the hardest part of being a new teacher. Each child is different and it’s hard to know that and learn from a book you have to have hands on experience dealing with that. I am not sure any school can prepare you for the uniqueness of each child.”

When asked if by diversity she meant racial, academic, and socioeconomic Amy replied,

“All of the above. There are just so many levels that you have to teach when you are a classroom teacher and that goes way beyond theory. That is why I think every new teacher should have to spend some time in the resource room because that is what they deal with every day.”

New Teachers

New teachers had many of the same responses. When asked what she was least prepared for academically Debbie did not hesitate:

“The amount of time that it was going to take to prepare lesson plans and make sure you meet all the standards....that and probably classroom management at the same time there is just so much to manage and you don’t realize it you think you’re just going to go in and just teach class but there is so much more to it.”

Callie was concerned with the amount of paper work also:

“I was not prepared for the paperwork just overwhelming amounts of it. And also assessments I feel like assessments that are an area that I am not strong in. We have midterms coming up being able to look back and evaluate kids and to have documents and proof that kind of go along with that is important because we don’t have a common assessment for everything its kind of what you’ve done and what you’ve kept I don’t think I have always did a good job at that.”

Allie was not as concerned with behavior management as she was with just getting all of the curriculum standards down:

“Maybe because I am a little older than some and I have my own children, but I felt very confident with my classroom management. I was much more concerned with the curriculum, especially being in a TCAP grade. When you first come in and you start looking at pacing guides and curriculum maps it was very easy to get overwhelmed and think there was no way I can do it all.”

Lena agreed when asked the biggest area of weakness:

“Understanding the curriculum and getting the curriculum into the standards. I feel that is what I was least prepared for. I was thrown into a classroom and said here’s your books and that’s it.”

Tina said virtually the same thing:

“I was at first concerned about the curriculum and whether or not what I was going to be able to do actually everything. I just didn’t know how to teach everything and I was concerned that I wouldn’t be able to even understand everything to teach.”

Natalie continued the theme:

“I felt like I was least prepared in the curriculum standards I looked over them I just didn’t know how to target them and how to teach them in an effective way. I felt like I was academically prepared for the classroom it’s just kind of one thing that you go into and have to learn on your own.”

Maria added:

“I felt like I was not ready for the new standards moving from South Carolina to here and most of them were the same but the social studies was probably the biggest difference and there is just no way to be prepared for that. I looked at the standards before I was hired but until you get in there and do it, you really do not understand how difficult it can be.”

Sara had the only response that indicated a lack of academic preparedness. Although all the other respondents noted areas of weaknesses, most expressed that the only way to rectify the situation was to actually do the job. No matter how rigorous any academic program is, it is simply impossible to learn all you need to learn. Sara stated she had a glaring academic weakness in her program. She replied:

“Teaching reading because I taught first graders and that’s all I had to teach reading and the thing that hit me first was the remembering everything that I had to remember what kid goes on what bus what kid cannot eat certain things at lunch and all that kind of thing just you don’t ever hear about.”

And when asked to further clarify, she added, “No [I was not academically prepared] so that’s why I went back to school because I had to teach reading all day long and didn’t know how to do it.”

Classroom organization and management is a key theme. All 20 interviewees expressed a desire to see implemented and incorporated ideas to make the transition from student to teaching a bit easier. All with the exception of Sara replied that the greatest academic factor in the success of new teachers is actual hands-on experience in the classroom.

Equal Partnerships

Personal dynamics are important in any type of relationship. This is especially true in mentorships. The study has already noted strong themes that have emerged around relationships, personality styles, and teaching styles. One key theme that bound all of those factors together was the idea of an equal partnership. In all the successful mentorships examined, all participants spoke of how they viewed each others as equal partners. This equality allowed both mentor and new teacher to recognize the value of shared learning.

Many of the mentors also noted how their own teaching was enhanced by new styles and techniques modeled by the new teachers. Technology was often one of the key avenues of learning.

Mentor Teachers

Penny commented:

“We had such an incredible relationship and I feel as if I have learned much from her. She had been a professional for thirteen years in another profession so it was not as if she had

no real life experience and I valued that. She was also wonderful with technology. I was able to start doing things in my classroom that for twenty eight years I thought would be impossible. So even though I was her mentor, I believe it was a mutually beneficial relationship.”

When asked if there was anything she had learned from her mentee, Sally said:

“Most definitely it was a two-way street I was able to share with her and she is very high on the technology end so she in turn would share new things with me. The technology has become so advanced and if you know how to use it, not only will students benefit, but it makes your job easier.”

Brenda added:

“Even though the new teacher and I were close to the same age, she had a much greater sense of how to use technology. I was comfortable using it in my personal life but had not made the jump into my professional life. Just little things like PowerPoint etc. were things that I learned how to use. Also because she was a teacher with experience, I felt like she had a lot to offer when it came to unit plans and things like that. So I feel it was definitely as beneficial for me as it was for her.”

The enthusiasm that new teachers start with was also noted by several of the mentor teachers.

Connie said:

“[I learn so much from them because] My goodness, they are just so excited about life and they are excited about being a teacher. They come in with this attitude that this is what I always wanted to be and here I am. They don’t have to burn out with the stress of all the

paper work that some of us have and they don't have to be in on all these committees they just love the life of being a teacher and I love that enthusiasm. It is just so wonderful because they will pick my brain and then I will pick their brain so it's like a give and take. I got my masters many years ago so I am not always on the edge of research.

Sandi agreed:

“New teachers just have so much enthusiasm that it is contagious. I have always been someone who loves to learn and I think when you are always surrounded by youthful enthusiasm you will always learn. Especially if you are humble and do not set your self up as a person who already knows it all. I have tried very hard not to be that kind of person and feel as if my new teachers have felt comfortable in sharing with me. I know I am definitely a better teacher because of these experiences.”

Julie always tried to keep an open mind.

“It is so hard when you have had success at any profession to not assume that you have all the right answers. I would hear teachers say sometimes that they did not need any new ideas because their ways has always worked. You do not hear that much any more. I always hoped I was not one of those people. So I tried to keep an open mind and I feel as if I have learned just as much from the new teachers as they have learned from me. I hope I made them feel that way.”

New Teachers

All the new teachers expressed appreciation for the way they were treated as a valued member of the team.

Debbie gushed:

“I definitely felt a big part of the team. Not so much with any new information that I brought to her but just because she would ask my opinion on things. It was so nice because I did not feel like a second tier citizen. She would ask me about lessons, and centers and when she was being evaluated she would show me the lessons she was doing and ask my opinion. So I felt like she saw me as an equal.”

Rebecca said:

“She made me feel so at home. I had a mentor at my other school [in another system] but I never had much contact with her. My mentor in Johnson City took time with me both professionally and personally. It was such a relief to feel a real valued part of the team.”

Sara explained the difference in her two mentors:

“It was just so nice to have someone who I felt like was in my corner. I think having a bad experience [the first time] helped me to appreciate how good I had it the second time. She was right across the hall and even though she made sure I was getting what I needed, we also had conversations like colleagues, which were nice.”

Natalie agreed:

“I think you are just so nervous when you first come into your first real job. Even though you try to act confident, you really think can I really do this. I think it takes getting in there and doing the job and hearing someone tell you what a good job you have done to truly believe it. Not just superficial stuff, but someone who appreciates you as a professional.”

Tina expressed that same kind of joy:

“I think when I really started to believe I was going to be a great teacher was when I realized my mentor was asking me for help. It was just not technology. I was able to help with lesson plans and unit plans. At first I never thought I would get there and would think she probably thought the same. But when she started to ask my opinion, I was like wow! I have arrived.”

Maria and Lena said how their prior experience in other systems helped. Maria commented:

“My mentor knew I had taught in another system, so she was constantly asking how we did things in South Carolina. So I never had any idea that I was anything other than an equal. She treated me great from the beginning. Maybe that is why the relationship worked so well.”

Lena added:

“Since I had already taught I think she was most concerned with showing me how this school and this system was run. She never acted better than me. I felt totally accepted.”

Even Callie, who terminated her mentoring relationship, said she was an equal:

“I never felt like she looked down upon me. That was never her problem. I stand up for myself so I think we could have handled that pretty early [laughs] if needed. She treated me great and I liked her as a person...I still do. Our problem was that we were not meeting the requirements of the mentor contract and I felt it was my obligation to notify someone about that. But she treated me great personally.”

Summary

Analysis of the data reveals that several strong themes emerged from these interviews. Relationships were developed and were often long lasting. The need to have a common planning period was seen as a critical component to the success of the program. Matching personalities and teaching practices were vital components. The structure provided by the system allowed teachers' flexibility yet still provided some accountability. Support systems were strengthened and everyone agreed that the most important academic preparation came with actual field work. And all agreed the mentoring process allowed them to create relationships that were equal and mutually beneficial.

Teachers strongly advocated for the continuation of the mentoring program of Johnson City Schools. Even those who had some negative experiences stated the mentoring process should definitely be continued. Further findings are analyzed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of mentors and new teachers about the effectiveness of the mentoring program of Johnson City Schools. This qualitative case study was conducted by interviewing 20 participants of the mentoring program. Eleven mentor teachers and 9 new teachers were chosen through purposeful sampling. A list of participants was obtained through Central Office and an email was sent explaining the nature of the study. Respondents signed an Informed Consent Form (Appendix D) and an interview guide was used (Appendix A). Probes, an interview technique that allows the interviewer to delve deeper following an interviewee's response, were used to gain a richer understanding of the respondents' views (Merriam, 1998).

As many as 30% of teachers leave the profession within the first 2 years of teaching and an amazing 50% leave within the first 7 years. Systems continue to scrutinize effective ways to be able to retain existing employees. High teacher turnover impacts a school's ability to build cohesive staffs, it costs additional money to continue to train and can be demoralizing for students, parents, and administrators. Promoting and developing an effective mentoring program can dramatically reduce the number of teachers leaving the profession (Udelhofen & Larson, 2003).

Johnson City Schools has attempted to increase the number of teachers retained through the employment of an effective mentoring program. In an interview, Debra Bentley, Supervisor of Instruction and Communication for Johnson City Schools, emphasized the importance of the

mentoring program in the schools. Bentley stated that mentoring is a critical part of the success of Johnson City Schools. She said mentoring is so important that it was included in the negotiated contract. Johnson City Schools spent \$17,000 to reimburse mentors for their time and effort beginning in 2007. This issue became personal for her this year because her daughter was hired at one of the schools in Johnson City. She has been able to see the tremendous impact mentoring has had not just as the supervisor in charge but also as a mother. Many of the same themes that emerged from the interviews were present in our discussion. Bentley discussed the need for a strong program with a combination of accountability and flexibility. She also stated that common planning time and administrative oversight into personality and teaching styles were integral components. In difficult economic times, additional programs are often the first to be eliminated. Bentley was proud that the elimination of the mentoring program was never considered (personal communication, August 27, 2009). According to Lee Herrin, Director of Human Resources for Johnson City Schools, the most recent percentage of teachers being renewed in Johnson City Schools after 1 year was 93% and for 3 years 85%. Both these figures are well above the national average (personal communication, September 1, 2009).

The purpose of this study was to examine the perception of those who have participated in the program and to determine if those respondents believed the program to be effective.

Research Questions

Research Question #1

1. From the perspective of new teachers, what are the key factors in developing a positive and impactful teacher mentoring program?

Relationships

Interview responses to this study noted several important themes as related to a positive and impactful mentoring program. All nine new teachers involved in this study cited the need for a positive relationship with their mentors. The ability to form and develop strong bonds made the transition from student to professional much easier. These relationships, although often personal, are built around shared purposes and like minded goals between the new teachers and their mentors (Carr, Hermann, & Harris, 2005).

New teachers used terms like “wonderful”, “very helpful”, and “incredible” to describe the relationships they developed in the mentoring program. Seven of the nine teachers spoke of the continued and growing relationships they have developed with their mentors.

Two new teachers had negative responses. One (Sara) described a former mentor as “unconcerned” and “uninterested.” While another (Callie) spoke of her terminated mentoring contract not as a result of a poor relationship but rather a lack of a fulfillment of the mentoring requirements.

Common Planning Time

All nine new teachers stated a key factor to developing a strong mentorship was common planning time. All were assigned teachers in their grade level and were very appreciative of their administrator’s efforts to protect a common planning time. It was seen as crucial to have a mentor in the same grade level who thoroughly understood the standards, recognized developmental aspects of their students, and was available throughout the day.

New teachers in this study appreciated the ability to “go across” the hall or have an answer to a question “in an instant.” The theme of common planning was always grouped with same grade level teaching or content area teaching. Even though new teachers stated the structure of the program required time outside of the traditional school day, they all agreed it to be an instrumental part of an effective mentoring program (Pelletier, 2006).

Similar Personality Styles/Teaching Practices

New teachers welcomed the commonality they were able to find in teaching and personality styles. Seven of the 9 respondents said it to be very important to their development as professionals. It was described most often as a “comfort level” that allowed them to feel more free and welcome.

The study revealed that new teachers saw the task of beginning teaching so difficult that having someone with a similar personality and teaching style was one less obstacle for them to overcome. One respondent said it was so important that the system should consider at the possibility of some type of personality test that is administered to all mentor and new teachers. She stated this would help administrators make more effective matches. Pelletier (2006) also references tools to match personality styles as a useful tool when designing an effective mentoring program.

One respondent, Sara, mentioned how she thought her mentor in a previous mentoring relationship did not value her teaching style, she also recalled how it reflected on how her previous mentor viewed her personally. She stated it was this beginning conflict that made her previous relationship ineffective. The other respondent, Donna, had a very positive relationship with her mentor and was totally embraced and supported by her mentor even though they

approached their classrooms very differently. Mona had a mixed response, stating that personalities were much more important than teaching styles. Mona stated that even though she and her mentor had very similar personalities, the way they managed their classes was different.

Program Structure

Program structure was mentioned by all nine respondents as an important component. It was not the specific structure of the program but the fact that the system requires a measure of accountability. Most national mentoring programs have some level of accountability structure (Mullen, 2005). The 25 hours required by Johnson City Schools was seen as an obtainable goal. In fact, all new teachers stated they exceeded those levels very early in the process.

All new teachers said the flexibility of the program allowed them to have a successful mentoring experience. Johnson City Schools requires the teachers and their mentors to log and turn into their administrators 25 hours outside the regular school day. These hours must be recorded in 5-hour segments over the course of the first 5 of the 6 weeks. The teachers and their mentors can use their discretion to decide when they complete these hours. It was interesting to note how these hours were completed. Several teachers met directly after school while others met early in the morning. One new teacher reported most of her additional time was accomplished via phone calls, while two teachers spoke of the number of hours that were spent over the weekends.

The structure of the program provided the teachers flexibility. The amount of variety in life experiences made the flexibility of the program necessary. There were some new teachers who were single and some married, there were new teachers with children, and those who had none, and those who traveled a short distance to work while others had a much longer trip. It was

this variety of circumstances that made the flexibility within the structure very important to all the new teachers interviewed.

Support Systems

All nine new teachers expressed a great appreciation for the support system provided through the mentoring system. This theme was different from relationships because it went beyond the personal and dealt with the ability to have professional support throughout their 1st-year experiences. Each of the respondents spoke of how the mentor relationship allowed them to not only have support directly through their individual mentor but it also allowed them to receive nurture professional support through the entire school. Support systems developed beyond the mentoring relationship were seen as key. New teachers were welcomed and recognized as equal members of the faculty thus allowing new teachers to have additional professionals to assist them in their development.

Building strong mentoring support systems through learning communities has been well documented in literature (Rutherford, 2005). All nine new teachers were supported by the overall community. The support began with strong administrative commitment from the Central Office, was a priority for the principals, and was evident throughout the school community. After the initial interview, Callie sent me an email. She had discussed with her mother, a retired 30-year teacher from another state, the question of support. She related that she had shared with me a sense of support she received from the entire school even though her mentoring had not gone as expected. Her mother said that she had never been asked in 30 years of teaching if she felt supported.

Equal Learning Opportunities

A final component to creating an impactful mentoring experience was the development of equal or shared learning opportunities. All nine respondents were most accepted when they realized their ideas were appreciated and respected by their mentors. The process of acceptance was often developed in stages. New teachers often began the process overwhelmed and uncertain of their place in their respective schools. As they became more comfortable with their personal relationship, the free exchange of ideas would occur. It would be during these exchanges new teachers said they were the most accepted or that they had arrived.

In all relationships belonging is a central component (Boreen & Niday, 2003). New teachers in this study stated being treated as an equal by their mentors allowed them the confidence to continue to be successful and removed the fear of developing their individual styles.

Research Question #2

2. From the perspective of new teachers, what have been the most difficult aspects of the mentoring program?

Two areas dominated the responses of the nine new teachers regarding the difficult aspects of the mentoring program, academic preparedness, and relationships. All nine new teachers reported they did not feel adequately prepared for the experience they faced when they began their careers. There was general consensus that the colleges and universities they attended had done a good job adequately preparing them for their careers. However, there was a frustration with the inability for those institutions to better replicate real life experiences.

The teachers interviewed said they had developed a strong educational background. Topics like child developmental stages, educational theory, and history of educational thought were all areas those interviewed were confident about as they began their careers. The issues considered much more practical such as classroom management, understanding assessments and curriculum integration were the areas where they expressed concern for being unprepared. All respondents stated their student teaching experiences helped but were not a real gauge of what to expect. Interestingly, the length of the student teaching did not seem to matter from the new teachers' perspectives. Five had a semester of student teaching, three had an entire year, and one teacher had only a certain number of hours to complete for her requirement.

One teacher, Sara, decided she was not academically prepared at all. She stated she realized all that was involved with teaching (specifically reading) she felt obligated to go back and get a master's degree. The greatest areas of concerns mentioned were classroom management issues and curriculum and standards integration. Seven of the nine interviewees said they had no course work on classroom management.

The theme of classroom management was reported often. During new teacher orientation in Johnson City these new teachers were told the number one reason teachers are not rehired is because of a lack of classroom management skills. It was frustrating for the new teachers to have so much of their careers relying on how they managed students and not what they knew. Dawn said that if this was such an important part of job retention, then it should be a much greater part of teacher preparation.

The frustration with curriculum and standards integration had less to do with any gaps in the new teacher academic preparation than the changing requirements of the educational field.

Changes in new federal mandates of No Child Left Behind, state testing procedures, curriculum standards, pacing guides, and local policy made it impossible for educational institutions to prepare students for the constant changing landscape in the field of education.

The results indicated that although all the new teachers stated they were not adequately prepared, they also said there were not much more the colleges and universities could do. Tina said it best when she said, “I guess that is why we talk so much about being lifelong learners. They [the colleges and universities] want us to be able to continue to grow as we grow as professionals.”

The second area of strong concern was negative relationships. All nine new teachers ended their mentoring programs with mentors who provided support and nurtured positive relationships. Two teachers spoke with passion about the negative influence poor mentoring relationships had in the past. Sara, whose parents were both teachers and who always wanted to be a teacher, initially expressed concern she had made the wrong career decision. The relationship was so negative that she could not even ask questions about the everyday functions of the school. Two years removed from the experience she still would become visibly upset when she recalled her experience. Sara even said, “I think I am angrier now because I know more about what she should have been doing. Back then, I just did not know and began to think that maybe it was just me, until I was placed with a new mentor in a new situation.”

Callie, who also had a mentor relationship terminated, was concerned the lack of actual authentic work being done was going to negatively impact her ability to teach and the ability of the grade level team to function effectively. She was relieved that she was able to go to her building administrator and have the situation resolved effectively and confidentially. She

expressed confidence the intervention of her administrator helped prevent a very negative experience.

Only two teachers reported a negative relationship as a barrier to an effective mentoring program, all nine teachers agreed that having positive relationships was instrumental. The seven new teachers who had positive experiences spoke about how different their careers would have been if they had been forced to participate in a negative experience.

Research Question #3

3. From the perspective of mentor teachers, what are the key factors in developing a positive and impactful teacher mentoring program?

Mentor teachers had almost an identical list of themes qualifications that made the mentoring experience both positive and impactful. The 11 mentors extolled the virtues of mentoring in general and specifically of Johnson City Schools. Sally, a 13 year veteran, recalled the need for mentoring when she began her career. She said, “I remember starting out in kindergarten and being handed a set of text books for the students to use. I did not know anything about the text books other than I knew I did not want to use them. I really struggled my first year with a lot of trial and error and wish I would have had someone to show me even the little things. So when I was asked to start doing this I took it very seriously.”

Relationships

Ten of the 11 mentors reported mentioned the positive relationships they had with their most recent new teachers. All were very proud to be asked to participate in the mentoring program and said they saw it as their personal responsibility to help make the new teachers

experience positive. Nine of the 11 reported buying their mentees gifts, meeting them for coffee, or sending them notes of encouragement to help build a better relationship.

All 11 said the relationships they developed with a new teacher (either past or present) helped them become better teachers and better mentors. One teacher summed it best when she said, “Of course everything is better when you like the person you are working with. I think it was my job to make sure those relationships bloom. I think most new teachers come in and want to learn, they want to make friends, and it seems to me our job is just not to mess that up. Make them feel wanted and a part of the team and just sit back and watch them grow.”

Common Planning Time

All 11 mentors stated common planning time was an integral part of effective mentoring. The ability to help the new teachers with the standards and to be intimately involved in the day to day process was seen as crucial. Only 4 of the 11 had ever tried to mentor someone from a different grade and found it difficult. The other 7 agreed that it could be done but it should be avoided if possible.

The biggest factor in common planning was having access to the mentor during the school day. It was a consensus that people who do not teach school have no idea how difficult it is to try to make time during the day to have any type of connection with people outside a common grade level. Common planning provided the mentors with daily access to new teachers to go over lesson plans, share classroom ideas, brainstorm on behavioral issues, or just listen to each other. The four teachers who mentored teachers outside their grade levels expressed if they were to do it again the system would need to design release time that allowed for some time during the school day.

Similar Personality Styles/Teaching Practices

Although not as strong an indicator as with new teachers, the majority of mentor teachers mentioned personality and teaching style matching aided in the effectiveness of their most recent experiences. All 11 followed a similar pattern: they would begin the mentoring experience by being very directive in the process and then encourage the new teacher to begin to adapt what they have seen into their own styles. However, this is not a requirement of the program, but a method that has emerged as a successful way to approach mentoring. In the initial mentoring meeting with Debra Bentley, mentor teachers are asked to provide continued support, create challenge, and provide professional vision. The program is intentionally vague about teaching styles. Bentley said this allows each mentor to provide a framework that works best for them (personal communication, August 27, 2009).

Sandi had some discussion about allowing new teachers and mentors to meet prior to the school year. She advocated using that time to help match teachers with similar personalities and teaching strategies to avoid drastic conflicts. Even though she said that as an effective mentor it was her responsibility to overcome any stylistic differences, she said the more people had in common the easier it would be to work together. Each mentor spoke about increasing efforts by Central Office to match personalities but also stated that in a small system or in a small school those opportunities are not always available.

Program Structure

The most universal response from all 11 teachers was the program was a success. Terms like “great”, “awesome”, “needed” were used frequently in the interviews. Most did not have the

experience when they were beginning their teaching careers and said having a program, any program, would have made their professional transitions easier.

Two teachers interviewed were pleased during the current economic difficulties that the system was committed to keeping a viable mentoring program in place. Although the stipend is minimal, mentor teachers stated there were increased expectations because of the monetary reimbursement. Johnson City Schools' mentoring contract pays 20 dollars an hour for up to 25 hours.

All mentor teachers stated the 25-hour requirement was adequate and easy to obtain but also the right amount of required time. Connie said, "The more requirements you put on the program the less likely you are able to get people to focus on the relationship of teaching, which is what is really important. If you have all these requirements that you are trying to meet, it will be harder to get mentors and it takes away from the flexibility."

Flexibility was a word used in 9 of the 11 interviews. According to the participants the program was able to strike the appropriate balance between accountability and individual freedom.

Support System

Support system was noted by the mentor teachers as an important factor of the mentoring program, but they expressed it from a different perspective. They stated it was one of the main responsibilities of the mentors. All mentor teachers recalled that support was a key element in their initial training (Rutherford, 2005). Ten of the 11 interviewed said they received the support they needed as mentors. The interviewees reported a strong sense of support that began during

their initial training that was reinforced by Central Office, building administrators, and fellow teachers

Eight of the 11 mentors interviewed noted how they had a vested interest in their mentees because they believed the support was reciprocal. Sally and a particularly moving story of the support system when the new teacher she worked with encountered some medical difficulties, she took her to the hospital, waited for her family to arrive, and checked up on her each day until she was able to return to work. When asked why she took all the extra time, she laughed and said. "It was not extra! It is what we do, what we should all do to help each other out. I have no doubt she would have done the same for me." Mutual support was seen by mentor teachers as a hidden benefit of the mentoring program.

Equal Learning Opportunities

As important as it was for beginning teachers to feel valued and an equal member of the team by having their ideas and thoughts appreciated, it was equally important to the mentor teachers recognize the learning opportunities that arose from mentoring. These learning opportunities generally fell into two categories; enthusiasm and technical expertise.

Enthusiasm was mentioned by 7 of the 11 teachers as one of the benefits they continued to gain from new teachers. It was frequently noted that it is refreshing it to have people begin their teaching careers each year with passion and excitement. Enthusiasm was seen as a continual reminder of how important teaching is and when one has a new infusion of enthusiasm it becomes motivating for everyone involved.

The opportunity to learn new classroom technology was mentioned by 8 of the 11 respondents as a component they learned from new teachers. Perhaps because teachers with

experience were not provided technology training during their education, or because colleges and universities are often on the cutting edge of technological advances in the classroom, mentors said they gained an additional expertise with technology tools. They often cited lack of time as a barrier to developing new technology skills, but when paired with a new teacher who already has some expertise it became a learning experience.

Mentor teachers stated that in order to be successful they must make the new teachers feel comfortable and a part of the teaching team. What they all came to realize that in doing so they benefited equally from the experience.

Research Question #4

4. From the perspective of mentors, what have been the most difficult aspects of the mentoring program?

The themes generated from this study were consistent between mentor and new teachers. Although the overwhelming response was positive, there were a few issues that mentor teacher saw as obstacles to overcome.

Classroom Organization and Time Management

Mentor teachers stated educational programs and universities can do little to make teachers more real world ready, but they still stated it was the most difficult hurdle in assisting a new teacher. The practical aspects of teaching such as attendance, parent communication, lesson plans preparation, and grade cards require so much time that new teachers are often overwhelmed. The ability to manage this time effectively was crucial because proper management then allowed new teachers to focus their energies on effective teaching.

The majority of respondents spent most of the beginning of their mentorships with the new teachers on what they called the nuts and bolts of the teaching profession. The mentor teachers said this created two large obstacles. First, less focus was put on classroom teaching because of the enormous amount of time that was spent informing new teachers of their daily responsibilities. Second, mentor teachers feared the beginning crush was one of the greatest factors in new teacher burn out. New teachers are taught how to teach and when they find out the tremendous amount of time they spend on issues not directly related to teaching they become very frustrated.

Relationships

The majority of the respondents had very positive responses about the relationships they developed and nurtured with their mentees. They all noted the importance of developing positive relationships with someone with whom you worked. Tonya, in particular expressed the deep frustration and pain when the relationship is broken. This was further compounded by lack of support from her building administrator. The relationship was so broken a request for transfer was granted.

Contrast this with the positive relationship Callie had with her administrator when the mentoring process was not working. Callie, a new teacher, was able to approach her administrator confidentially and have a positive resolution to a potentially negative situation. The delicate balance between the relationship of mentors, new teachers, and administrators was viewed as a critical piece of effective mentoring.

Research question #5

5. How is this program implemented in different ways within the Johnson City School System?

When this study was developed there was some concern by the researcher that the flexibility of the program would lead to different implementation in the individual schools. There were participants from seven different schools and the major difference noted was the involvement level of the administrators. Although most schools had similar levels of administrative involvement, at some schools the administrator was much more active in the participation of the program. One principal even set up a series of dinners to be attended by all mentors and mentees to provide an opportunity to share with additional people. The administrator would participate in the hiring of a new teacher and this teacher would then be assigned a mentor teacher. The mentor teacher would be assigned from within the same grade level when possible and the mentor teacher would attend the mentoring training hosted by Central Office

Mentors and new teachers are then required to keep a reflection log of the time spent together. When the 1st year is complete, these logs, along with another reflection instrument, are turned into Central Office for evaluation.

There was no variation in material used, reflection instruments, or basic implementation of the mentoring program. The flexibility worked as it was intended to do. It allowed teachers to use time in a way that fit their individual styles yet the program still required some accountability.

Research Question #6

6. In what ways does that difference, if any, influence the experiences of new teachers from one school to another?

There was no significant difference in how the program was implemented. Administrative styles and oversight were important factors, but the actual implementation of the program was consistent from school to school.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Through this research, personal experiences, and the examination of thoughtful, reflective, and honest responses shared by mentors and new teachers who agreed to participate in this study, the researcher was able to draw specific conclusions. The need to develop effective, well- thought, and nurturing mentoring programs are essential to local school districts. It was gratifying to hear about the positive efforts Johnson City Schools is making and exciting to think about the possibilities for genuine improvement in the mentoring program based on insight provided through these interviews.

The data collected and analyzed in this study support following conclusions:

1. Mentoring is an important component for a teacher making a successful transition into a new school.
2. Positive relationships are critical to fostering successful mentoring teams.
3. Common planning time maximizes the value of the mentoring process.
4. Strong support systems assist both mentors and new teachers.

The mentoring program in Johnson City Schools is strong, yet there are some recommendations for improvement based on the findings of this study.

Recommendations for New Teachers

1. Take every opportunity to learn about time management. The job will become less complicated when a teacher can learn to master the daily responsibilities of teaching and to make more efficient use of time.
2. Understand the importance of relationships. A sense of connectedness and a strong support system facilitate job effectiveness.
3. Recognize your value to the overall effectiveness of the school. Mentors are excited about the new mentees. Teaching and learning is a process that affects everyone. Do not be afraid to share your new ideas and techniques.
4. Be an active learner. Most new teachers come into the profession with strong basic skills. They have completed a rigorous education, made it through a difficult interview process, and persevered through many challenges. It is just the beginning and areas of weakness can be improved if you seek ways to address those issues. Additional course work, inservice training, educational conferences, educational memberships, or selected readings can all assist your continual education. Continue to work hard and recognize the daily requirements of teaching are important. It may not be what you were taught to teach, but it is what allows you to teach.
5. Open and honest communication is important. Do not allow negative issues to fester and become greater obstacles to your development. Discuss with your mentor and administrator your concerns.

Recommendations for Mentor Teachers

1. Understand the significance of your appointment. When reviewing the data it was clear to see how impactful the person was to the process. Programs are only as effective as the people involved in them.
2. Recognize the value and talents of the new teacher assigned to you. In this study a critical element for success was the mentor teachers' ability to make the new teacher feel a valuable part of the team.
3. Work to find a structure within the program that meets both your needs and your mentees needs. Compromise might be required. If your mentee is a parent of a small child, after school meetings might not be the most appropriate time to schedule meetings. If the teachers travel a great distance, it might be unrealistic to expect them to come on weekends.
4. Provide opportunities for new teachers to observe you (or others in the school) but encourage them to have the flexibility to experiment with techniques and ideas that are uniquely theirs.
5. Have open and honest communication. If you meet often and discuss area of agreement and areas of concern the process will be much more effective.

Recommendations for Administrators

1. Pay attention to personality and teaching styles. It is not impossible for those with different personalities or with different teaching styles to have an effective mentoring experience, but it is something that needs to be considered carefully.
2. If at all possible provide common planning time. The two central themes that emerged from this study were the importance of relationships and the need for common planning

time. The study indicated the ability to have frequent common planning time, mentor access, and have someone who has mastery of the knowledge is critical to the success of the mentoring program.

3. Stay involved. A mentoring program needs administrative support and oversight.

Recommendations for Central Office

1. Commit to the program. Continue to provide appropriate support, money, and training.
2. Be reflective. Evaluate the programs' successes and opportunities to improve. Reflective examination is important to the continual growth of the program.
3. Expand cross-mentoring experiences. Many of the participants in this study suggested additional opportunities be provided to meet with other mentors and new teachers to share ideas and frustrations throughout the year. This could be done as part of the teacher inservice responsibility.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Develop a long-term study that tracks the progress of new teachers over a 3-year period.
2. In Johnson City Schools examine the possibility of extending the mentoring program for more than 1 year. Most successful mentoring programs have a process that extends beyond 1 year.
3. Study administrators' perceptions of teacher mentoring. No principals were interviewed formally for this study.
4. Compare and contrast the differences between first career new teachers and those who have had previous careers and examine how the mentoring process affects the different populations.

5. Study the effects of the mentoring process on transitional-alternatively prepared teachers as a specific subgroup.

Researcher's Future Plans

The process of research, literature review, data collection, data analysis, interviews, and reflection has helped me appreciate the importance and impact of mentoring for new teachers. I have now moved into an administrative position that requires more oversight and program implementation than my previous position. Although mentorship does not fall specifically under my responsibilities, I believe my understanding will help provide some guidance as the system continues to refine its efforts.

I began this process thinking about one individual, an individual was so positively impacted by the mentoring program that it changed her fundamentally as a teacher and as a person. I believed then, and am reinforced now, that if school systems will provide the time, effort, and resources, mentoring can be an effective way to increase teacher retention, increase teacher productivity, and positively affect student outcomes. Everything we do in education should be to that end. As an aspiring principal, I hope to always have the most effective staff with the ability to provide the most effective educational experience for all involved.

I once heard an experienced administrator say she kept a sign on her desk that said 30 X 30. It meant that teachers she recommended for tenure would have a dramatic impact on 900 students throughout their career, and she said it was her duty to make sure that those hired are the very best. I believe this study demonstrates an effective mentoring program is one way to ensure a higher quality of teachers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

I. Introduction

A. Welcome.

B. I would like to thank you for your participation in this study about your opinions of the mentoring program. I plan on presenting this material for publication and for review to Central Office as they examine the effectiveness of the mentoring program; therefore all of your information, feelings and thoughts are important.

Your participation in this study will remain anonymous. This session should take approximately one-hour. Do you have any questions before I begin taping this conversation?

C. I will have each interviewee sign a consent form.

D. Session will begin.

II. Main Interview Questions for New Teachers

1. As a new teacher, what needs and concerns did you have as you began your professional career?
2. What is your relationship with your mentor? Do you feel that you have a true learning atmosphere or do you feel as if you are being directed in a particular way to teach?
3. Do you feel as if you and your mentor make good use of the system mandated time? Do you wish you had more time together or less?
4. What has been the most positive aspect of the mentoring program? The least?
5. If you could change one thing about the mentoring program what would it be?

III. Main Interview Questions for Mentors

1. As a mentor, what needs and concerns did you have as new teachers begin their professional career?
2. What is your relationship with your mentee? Do you feel as if you have a true learning atmosphere? Do you feel as if you allowed the mentee to develop their own teaching style or did you feel more directive?
3. Do you feel as if you and your mentee make good use of the system mandated time? Do you wish you had more time together or less?
4. What has been the most positive aspect of the mentoring program? The least?
5. If you could change one thing about the mentoring program what would it be?

IV. Conclusion

- A. Here is what I understand that you believe to be the most important aspects of our time today.....Do you agree?
- B. Any additional comments?
- C. Turn-off the tape recorder. Do you have any off the record comments?
- D. Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX B

Document Review Guide

Document Title: _____

Date of Document: _____

Date Retrieved: _____

Document Review Questions:

1. What are the Central Office policies for mentoring?

1. What are individual school policies for mentoring?

2. Are there any conflicts in the policies?

APPENDIX C
Reflection Guide

Who was Observed: _____

Where: _____

Mentor or Teacher: (Circle One)

Observation Questions:

1. How do I feel the teacher's behaviors complimented their responses?

2. What visual and verbal cues stood out?

3. What question did the teacher/mentor appear to be most uncomfortable answering?

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

Page 1 of 4

PRINCIPLE Investigator: Gregory Scott Wallace

TITLE OF PROJECT: *Perceptions of Mentor and New Teacher: A Case Study of a Mentoring Program in Northeast Tennessee.*

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY INFORMED CONSENT

The purpose of this note of INFORMED CONSENT is to explain a research project in which I am requesting your participation. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to be a volunteer. By no means is there any pressure for you to participate in this research.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study will be to examine the perceptions of mentor and new teachers regarding the effectiveness of the formal mentoring program of Johnson City Schools.

DURATION:

Participants will be asked to participate in an interview where data will be collected. There will be no limit to the interviews, the investigator will use a script but will also employ the use of snowballing as to gain further insight into the experience.

The results of the study will be used by Central Office to continue to develop a richer and more effective mentoring experience.

Version: July 20, 2009

Subject's Initial_____

PRINCIPAL Investigator: Gregory Scott Wallace

TITLE OF PROJECT: *Perceptions of Mentor and New Teacher: A Case Study of a Mentoring Program in Northeast Tennessee.*

PROCEDURES:

In all forms of qualitative research, some or most of the data is collected through interviews (Merriman, 1998). Therefore, interviews will be conducted by using a script and allowing the questions to snowball as the respondent discusses their experiences and perceptions of the mentoring program. Interview respondents will be determined through purposeful sampling to ensure all respondents are a part of the official mentoring program.

The director of schools in Johnson City Tennessee has given his approval of this specific research. Principals at each of the schools also allowed permission. Upon approval 12 first year teachers and the mentors assigned to them will be asked if they are will to participate in this research.

All interviews will be conducted at the convenience of the participants and will be conducted by the researcher using audio-taping and researcher transcription. An independent auditor will listen to the tapes and read the transcription to ensure accuracy. Dr. Rebecca Sapp who has been IRB trained will serve as auditor.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES:

There are no alternative procedures. Your participation is voluntary.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORT:

No known or expected risks are associated with this research.

Version: July 20, 2009

Subject's Initial _____

PRINCIPAL Investigator: Gregory Scott Wallace

TITLE OF PROJECT: *Perceptions of Mentor and New Teacher: A Case Study of a Mentoring Program in Northeast Tennessee.*

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

By participating in this research project, the participants will be able to help to continue to refine and develop a more effective mentoring program for Johnson City Schools. The participant's perceptions will be a valuable source of data for Central Office.

CONTACT FOR QUESTION:

If you have any questions, problems or research related medical problems you may call Greg Wallace at 423-741-4371 or Dr. Pam Scott at 336-9275884. You may call the chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423-439-6314 for any questions you have about your rights as a participant in this research.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Every attempt will be made to keep the participant's responses confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the Principal Investigator's home. The use of pseudonyms will be used when describing the participant's responses in the research project and will be sufficiently changed to protect the identity of the participants. My data will be shared in the final research project however the individual participants will be protected unless required by law.

Version: July 20, 2009

Subject's Initial _____

PRINCIPAL Investigator: Gregory Scott Wallace

TITLE OF PROJECT: *Perceptions of Mentor and New Teacher: A Case Study of a Mentoring Program in Northeast Tennessee.*

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

The nature, demands and risks of this research project have been explained to me and are known. I also understand that I can refuse to participate with our any penalty. I also understand that my information will be held confidentially at the principal investigators home and will not be shared unless required by law. I have read and had read to me, and fully understand the informed consent. A signed copy has been provided to me. I sign it freely and voluntarily.

SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER

DATE

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

DATE

APPENDIX E

Initial Email

To: New Teachers/Mentors that are a part of the Johnson City Schools Mentoring Program

From: Greg Wallace

Date: July 27, 2009

Re: Research

I am currently doing research on the perceptions of teachers about the formal mentoring program being used by Johnson City Schools. The name of my research project is, *Perceptions of Mentor and New Teacher: A Case Study of a Mentoring Program in Northeast Tennessee*. I would like to ask you to privately share your perceptions of the mentoring program.

Your perceptions will be compiled in my dissertation and shared with Central Office as a way to help produce a stronger mentoring program. Your participation in this program is completely voluntary. All information shared with me will be coded and protected. Any use of quotes will be assigned pseudonyms and you will have an opportunity to review all information for accuracy before completion.

If you are interested please respond to me at wallaceg@jcschools.org or call me at 423-434-5290.

If you have any additional questions please do not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

Greg Wallace

VITA

GREGORY SCOTT WALLACE

Personal Data: Date of Birth: July 5, 1965

Place of Birth: Rochester, New York

Marital Status: Married

Education: Public Schools: Ripley, West Virginia

Kentucky Christian University, Grayson, Kentucky

Christian Ministry, B.S.

1988

Emmanuel School of Religion, Johnson City Tennessee

Master of Divinity

1991

East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee

M. Ed. School Counseling

1995

East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee

Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, Ed. D.

2009

Professional

Experience: 1988-1993- Youth Minister, Colonial Heights Christian Church,
Kingsport, Tennessee

1993-2006- Elementary School Counselor, Indian Springs

Elementary School, Kingsport, Tennessee

2006-2009- Elementary School Counselor, South Side

Elementary, Johnson City, Tennessee

2009-Present- Project Director HEROES grant, Johnson

City Schools, Johnson City, Tennessee