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Teacher Retention: Program Evaluation of a Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program

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Teacher Retention: Program Evaluation of a Beginning
Teacher and Mentor Program

By
Janet B. Anthony

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approval Page

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Abstract

Teacher Retention: Program Evaluation of a Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program. Anthony, Janet B., 2008: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, New Teachers/Induction/Retention/Mentoring/Principal Support

This dissertation evaluated a beginning teacher induction and mentor program currently used in a rural, county school system in western North Carolina and its effectiveness in the retention of teachers. The system has 29 schools, around 16,690 students, and employs approximately 1200 certified staff members. Using the CIPP Evaluation Model with a formative approach, information was gathered about the conditions that necessitated the program, procedures and practices used by the system to provide support and assistance to beginning teachers, whether or not established processes were being followed, and the impact of the program on beginning teacher retention. Individual and focus groups at the elementary, middle, and high school levels were conducted. A survey about the current beginning teacher induction program was completed by beginning teachers, mentors, and school principals. An open-ended questionnaire was used to provide additional input from beginning teachers. Data were analyzed using triangulation by identifying recurring themes from all sources to determine the effectiveness of the program.

Results indicate that the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program met the mandate of the state of NC to assist with the retention of beginning teachers. Program components were identified as helping to address the needs of teachers during their first years of service. Specific sessions were found to provide relevant information about teacher expectations. Mentor support was determined to be a vital part of the total program. Principal support, likewise, was noted to be of importance to beginning educators. Established processes are being adhered to by the system, mentors, and principals. The beginning teacher retention rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 91.5%.

Findings of the study support the benefits of an induction program, mentors for beginning teachers, and principal support in the retention of beginning teachers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem Statement

Introduction

During recent years, teacher retention has become an issue of great concern for those in the field of education (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 2002). While, on the surface, a teacher shortage may be perceived, research indicates that a high teacher turnover rate is decreasing the number of educators remaining in the profession (NCTAF).

The NCTAF (2002) reports that colleges in the United States graduate more than enough teachers to meet the demands of school systems across the country. In a response to the increasing need for teachers, the number of colleges with teacher preparation programs rose from 1,287 in 1984 to 1,354 in 1998 (NCTAF). Additionally, the yearly number of graduates from these institutions rose over 50% to 230,000 graduates in 1999-2000. Retirement projections, while increasing due to the large number of teachers becoming eligible, only account for 28% of the number of teachers that will be needed in the next 10 years (NCTAF). Such research indicates the shortage of teachers is not due to the lack of eligible teachers or to teacher retirement, but to the excessive rate of teachers exiting the

profession (NCTAF, 2002; Ingersoll, 2003).

The shortage of teachers across the nation is also relative to locations and conditions. Systems in some areas may actually have a surplus of teachers, while others have severe shortages. Systems with better working conditions, higher salaries, supportive policies, and in close proximity to teacher education institutions often have surpluses of eligible teachers. Inner city and poorer systems, along with those who have less supportive working conditions and lower salaries, often have the greatest difficulty finding teachers to fill their classrooms and retaining these educators (NCTAF).

Research indicates that 33% of teachers leave the profession during the first 3 years of employment, and up to 50% of new teachers leave the profession within their first 5 years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Huling-Austin, 1990; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991). Further studies have shown a high correlation between high college test scores and new teachers that quickly leave the profession (Murnane et al.; Henke, Chen, & Geis, 2000; Schlechty & Vance, 1981). Many of the smartest new educators are more likely than others to exit the profession after a short period of time.

Review of retention rates can provide valuable information related to costs for school systems. A study conducted in Texas concluded that the yearly state turnover rate of 15% of all teachers costs the state around \$329 million a year. Beginning teachers, or those in their first 3 years of teaching, were included in the study, and had a turnover rate of 40%. The cost calculates to about \$8000 per teacher (Andrews & Martin, 2003). Improving the retention rates of teachers can save substantial amounts of money for systems (Andrews & Martin).

The problem of teacher retention has additionally led to the hiring of individuals who have entered the profession through alternative methods (Barnett, Hopkins-Thompson, & Hoke, 2002). Often employed with emergency certificates, these new hires have little or no classroom experience or preparation. The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality reports that these least-prepared educators are frequently placed in schools with the most disadvantaged students (Barnett et al.). According to a study completed at Harvard University (Barnett et al.), such teachers are basically unprepared for the classroom. Teacher induction programs can provide such novice teachers with needed preparation to help them remain in education as well as help them master skills necessary for effective

classroom instruction (Barnett et al.).

In a study conducted by Richard Ingersoll, Associate Professor of Education and Sociology at Philadelphia University, the average attrition rate for teachers was 31.2% while the rate of turnover in other professions was 11% (Heller, 2004). Equally alarming is the fact that within the first three years of teaching, 29% of new teachers leave the profession (Heller). According to Ingersoll, educators should be more focused on the retention of teachers and less on their recruitment (Heller).

Statement of the Problem

In an effort to alleviate the problem of the high rate of teacher attrition, a large number of school systems and states have introduced teacher induction programs. Such programs are aimed at reducing the number of new teachers that leave education before retirement (Arends & Rigazio-Digilio, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, Schwile, Carver, & Yusko, 1999; Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999; Holloway, 2001; Scherer, 1999). Teacher induction refers to the preparation and training that takes place as teachers move from student teaching to real-life teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). It may involve workshops, seminars, support systems, and, in particular, mentoring. Mentoring is viewed as the

guidance given to beginning teachers by educators with multiple years of experience in the classroom (Ingersoll & Smith). Within the last 20 years, various studies have found these programs to vary greatly.

Teacher induction programs often include the support of school administrators as an integral part of their total program (Wood, 2005). Wood states that principals should perform periodic checks on their new teachers, provide support to both the mentor and the beginning teacher, and establish clear expectations for the novice teacher. In addition, Wood reports that most information related to principal support of new teachers has been in the form of policy articles instead of research studies and that further research in this area is needed.

Purpose of the Study

Additional study and evaluation of new teacher induction programs and their effects on teacher retention continue to be needed by states and school systems in an effort to retain the best and brightest new educators (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). The purpose of this program evaluation was to contribute to the field of study by exploring the effects of a new teacher induction program on teacher retention.

Setting

The Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program is conducted yearly at a school system located in rural western North Carolina. The school system has about 1200 certified staff members within 29 schools and around 16,690 students. Approximately 75 new teachers are hired each school year. The turnover rate for the 2004-2005 school year was 8% according to the current Director of Personnel (R. Wilson, personal communication, June 7, 2006). This percentage includes teachers who leave the system completely for various reasons but does not include those teachers who may transfer from one school to another within the system. Prior to the start of school, 2 weeks of intensive sessions are initially held to provide newly hired and beginning teachers with relevant information that will help them acclimate to the system, the schools, the community, and the teaching profession. Mentors are assigned to all beginning teachers for a 3-year period and meet regularly with them to assist and guide the new teachers as they begin their teaching careers. Throughout a teacher's first 3 years of teaching, countywide meetings are held for new teachers to provide needed training and assistance. In addition, staff-development opportunities are provided to supply newly employed teachers with skills and training

necessary for a successful start to their classroom experiences. Mentors, as well, are provided training to assist them as they guide and nurture beginning teachers.

Principal involvement at each school site is a part of the total program. School administrators assign mentors to the beginning teachers, monitor the teacher-mentor relationship, and support new teachers by providing clear expectations and appropriate guidance. Mentors and administrators sign a system-generated contract that signifies and specifies the kind of support that will be provided to new teachers throughout the induction program.

Permission to conduct the study was given through personal communication with the superintendent of the school system (B. Boyles, personal communication, April 17, 2008). The following data reflect the studied school system.

Table 1

Annual Teacher Turnover Summary

School Year	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Total number of teachers			
employed in system	1,330	1,274	1,321
Total number of teachers			
leaving system	106	112	106
Teacher turnover rate	7.97%	8.79%	8.02%

Rationale for Program Evaluation

According to Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004), evaluation of a program assists in determining the value or worth of the object being evaluated. A program evaluation approach uses methods of inquiry by: (a) establishing standards by which to judge program quality, (b) providing the collection of relevant information, and (c) applying those standards to the program in an effort to establish its effectiveness, significance, or value (Fitzpatrick et al.).

Varying approaches to program evaluation have been established. Fitzpatrick et al. (2004) suggest that five basic approaches can be implemented. These approaches are objectives-oriented, management-oriented, consumer-oriented, expertise-oriented, and participant-oriented. A

management-oriented approach was used for this study. This type of study focuses on specific goals and objectives of a program and evaluates whether or not these have been reached (Fitzpatrick et al.)

Fitzpatrick et al. (2004) state that two basic types of program evaluation are most often used in the field of research-formative and summative. A formative approach is used when the purpose of the evaluation is to determine the need for program improvement (Fitzpatrick et al.). A summative approach to program evaluation focuses on gathering and providing information as to the program's overall value and its worth of continuation (Fitzpatrick et al.). A formative evaluation was implemented with this study.

Model of Program Evaluation

Stufflebeam's CIPP Evaluation Model was used to evaluate the identified teacher induction and mentor program (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Such an approach helps those making decisions as they collect information, review advantages and disadvantages to possible alternatives, and determine how evaluation decisions will be made (Fitzpatrick et al.). The framework used with this model assists evaluators as four types of decisions are determined. *Context evaluation* decisions are those related

to planning. Such decisions evaluate what needs a program has and what conditions currently exist that warrant such a program (Fitzpatrick et al.). *Input evaluation* refers to decisions that have to do with the structure of the organization such as what the system is actually doing to meet the needs of the group (Fitzpatrick et al.). *Process evaluation* relates to how plans are implemented. As the answers to how processes occur within a program are determined, procedures may be improved or enhanced (Fitzpatrick et al.). The final component of Stufflebeam's framework is that of *product evaluation*, whether or not the desired results were achieved (Fitzpatrick et al.).

Research Questions

Using the CIPP model, specific research questions were utilized to evaluate the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program.

1. What are the contextual conditions that warrant a beginning teacher induction program?
2. What is the school system doing within as well as outside the program to build support and assistance to beginning teachers?
3. What are the established processes of the program and are they being followed?
4. What is the impact of the Beginning Teacher and

Mentor Program on teacher retention?

Definition of Terms

1. Teacher Induction Program - the preparation and training that takes place as teachers move from student teaching to real life teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).
2. Mentoring - guidance provided to a beginning teacher by educators with multiple years of experience in the classroom (Ingersoll & Smith).

Summary

The retention rate of teachers is a concern to educators as school systems strive to supply classrooms with qualified teachers (Ingersoll, 2002). An increasing demand for teachers has created a need to examine current practices to determine their effects on teacher retention. This program evaluation of a Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program provides data to add to the growing body of knowledge in an effort to diminish the problem of high teacher turnover.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

The purpose of this program evaluation was to study the effects of a Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program on teacher retention. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, the apparent teacher shortage occurring in the United States is actually a teacher retention problem (Colgan, 2004). While the number of educators entering the field slightly increased during the 1990's, the rate of teacher attrition grew at a higher rate (Colgan). In response to concerns about this situation, school districts have implemented a variety of new teacher induction and mentoring programs (Colgan).

Programs vary in quality and design according to Richard Ingersoll and Jeffrey M. Kralik who presented information on induction programs for the Education Commission of the States in a February 2004 report (Colgan, 2004). The report indicated that research pertaining to the effectiveness of the programs has been lacking, often reaching conclusions that were not truly shown by their data (Colgan). Further investigation and study is needed to determine the conditions and practices that will enable systems to retain quality educators (Colgan). Using the CIPP program, evaluation model a Beginning Teacher and

Mentor Program was studied and evaluated.

Teacher Induction and Mentoring Programs

Curran and Goldrick (2002) reported that, according to a 1996 survey conducted by Recruiting New Teachers Incorporated [RNT], new teacher induction programs effectively reduce the attrition rates of new teachers. Additionally, RNT concluded that such programs positively impact the quality of teachers who participate in an induction program as well as the learning experiences of the students whom they teach (Curran & Goldrick).

The California New Teacher Pilot Project, a study sponsored by the California Department of Education and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing between 1988 and 1992, has shown significantly increased retention rates for teachers who participated in the project (Curran & Goldrick, 2002). At the end of 1 year, 91% of those who participated remained in the profession. Following the second year, 87% of participants continued to teach (Curran & Goldrick). In 1992 California revised their program, initiating a Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program (BTSA). This support program provides an induction program that allows new teachers to participate in supervised school experiences. Within the program, seminars aimed at increasing the professional growth of new teachers

are provided. Both informal and formal assistance focused on classroom practice, and curriculum implementation is made available to beginning teachers. New teachers are encouraged to develop reflective practices as a part of their assessment and support system. Along with reflection, teachers are required to keep a personal log recording classroom teaching successes. Throughout the induction period, collaborative sessions with other new teachers and mentors are offered to improve and increase new teacher support (Marquez-Lopez, Hendrick, Franco, & Edey, 2002). Data show that a great majority of teacher participants were retained with 96% reported during 1999-2000 (Curran & Goldrick). The attrition rate for beginning teachers over a 5-year period was 9% for participants within the state of California. The attrition rate for non-participants was 37% (Curran & Goldrick).

Joftus and Maddox-Dolan (2002) have examined the Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS), which was implemented in 1999. Modeled after the California BTSA, the program was designed to assist newly hired educators through support and training (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan). TxBESS strives to increase teacher retention, assist new teachers as they develop effective teaching strategies, and improve the performance of students (Joftus & Maddox-

Dolan). Beginning teachers are assigned a support team during the first year of service. The team consists of a trained mentor, the school administrator, education center staff members, and educators from teacher preparation colleges and universities (Charles A. Dana Center Research Unit, 2002). The assigned mentor uses a coaching model to support the new teacher by meeting frequently, performing formal and informal observations of the new teacher, allowing observations of the mentor by the new teacher, and providing support when needed. The school level administrator, through implementation of strategies through administrator staff development, establishes a school climate that is supportive of the beginning teacher. In addition, professional development opportunities for beginning teachers are made available to support and enhance these individuals as they begin their teaching careers (Texas State Board for Educator Certification, 2005). During the first year of implementation, 88% of participants returned for a second year as compared to 80% prior to the initiation of the program (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan).

The school district of Lafourche Parish, Louisiana implemented a new teacher induction program called Framework for Inducting, Retaining, and Supporting Teachers

(FIRST) in 2001 (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan, 2002).

Participants attend 4 days of training in the summer prior to the start of school. Sessions provide training that center on classroom management, local policies and procedures, discipline, the first days of school, and effective teaching (Louisiana Department of Education, 2001). Throughout the school year, new teachers attend monthly meetings designed to address concerns and allow time for the sharing of successes. Central office staff provides additional training, completes observations, and offers suggestions to teachers for instructional improvement.

The Lafourche Parish School System has collected attrition data since 1993. For the 3 years prior to the implementation of the new teacher induction program, the system reported an attrition rate of 51% (Louisiana Department of Education). After the initial year of the FIRST program, the rate dropped to 12% (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan, 2002). From 1996-2001 the average attrition rate has been 11% (Louisiana Department of Education). The state of Louisiana adopted the FIRST program as its induction model due to the success of the program (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan).

Ingersoll and Smith (2004) conducted an empirical study to evaluate the effects of teacher induction programs

on the teacher turnover of beginning teachers. The main data source used was the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), which was developed and handled by the National Center for Education Statistics (Ingersoll & Smith). Given for four complete independent cycles in 1987-1988, 1990-1991, 1993-1994, and 1999-2000, the study used the most recent teacher survey questionnaire because of its inclusion of expanded items related to mentoring, new teacher induction, and professional development (Ingersoll & Smith). Ingersoll and Smith used a sample from a cohort comprised of all beginning teachers in the United States in 1999-2000. The sample provided information about teachers who participated in the study as well as those who did not.

Teachers who had participated in induction activities reported involvement in activities such as mentoring, close contact with other educators, and those who received additional resources (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Since the researchers used data that was nationally represented, they were able to control for numerous school characteristics and teacher information. Results from the study indicated that effective new teacher support was significantly related to teacher retention (Ingersoll & Smith).

Principal Support

While few studies that evaluate the impact of the

principal's role in supporting new teachers through mentoring have been conducted, a body of research is emerging. Brock and Grady (1998) conducted a study to examine both principal and beginning teacher perceptions of the role, support, and direction given to new teachers by administrators. Initially, information was gathered from teachers beginning their second year of teaching through random surveys distributed by mail to 75 elementary and high school teachers in Nebraska (Brock & Grady). Sixty-five percent of respondents returned the surveys that described the assistance they had received from their school administrators, problems they had faced during their first year of teaching, and suggestions on what they thought should encompass a beginning teacher mentoring program (Brock & Grady).

The second phase of the study consisted of surveys mailed to a random sample of elementary and high school principals in Nebraska (Brock & Grady, 1998). Seventy-five percent of the surveys were returned. Principals shared the problems they had encountered with beginning teachers, expectations for classroom performance, and methods they used to assist their new educators (Brock & Grady).

Results of the study indicate that beginning teachers want their principals to share expectations, philosophies,

and values. Communication between the principal and new teacher was cited as important as well as a scheduled time for this collaboration (Brock & Grady, 1998). Classroom observations and visits, feedback on areas for improvement, and affirmative support were noted as valued by beginning teachers from survey results. High visibility of the principal during the school day was important to most respondents. The school principal was identified as a main source of guidance and support for new teachers, even above mentors. Beginning teachers expressed that they want to please their administrators and receive favorable evaluations from them. Teachers shared that, if positive feedback was not provided, they felt frustrated and alone (Brock & Grady).

Additional information from the study by Brock and Grady (1998) indicated that most beginning teachers viewed their need for a mentor as a vital part of their induction program. They noted, however, that principals should be selective in those chosen as mentors and that training should be provided for teachers who are selected. Mentors, according to new teachers, should ideally teach at the same grade level or content area, have several years of experience, be able to provide useful suggestions, and be good listeners. Identified as a concern by teachers was the

lack of essential training of mentors (Brock & Grady).

Andrews and Quinn (2005) conducted a study to determine if a significant difference existed between the perceived amount of support for beginning teachers from a mentor assigned by the school system's mentor teacher program, a mentor assigned by a principal, and no assigned mentor. Participating in the study were all of the first year teachers in a school district of 60,000 students, 59 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, 13 high schools, and 1 special education high school during the 2001-2002 school year (Andrews & Quinn). A 20-item questionnaire was administered to 188 individuals identified as beginning teachers (Andrews & Quinn). One hundred thirty-five were returned. Questionnaire items were grouped together to comprise five main areas of support (Andrews & Quinn). Results showed that first year teachers with mentors assigned by the school district's mentor program perceived significantly more support than those with no mentor (Andrews & Quinn). Recommendations from this study for school-based administrators were: (a) the quality of existing mentor programs should be improved, (b) additional time should be provided for mentors to assist novices with curriculum and instruction concerns, (c) release time should be provided for new teachers by administrators to

observe other teachers, and (d) follow-up conferencing should take place after observations (Andrews & Quinn).

Wood (2005) conducted a study of principals' roles in an urban induction program with administrators from 8 high schools, 4 middle schools, and 42 elementary schools. Five specific case studies were completed. The research sought to determine the roles principals play in supporting new teachers and how these principals participate in the system's new teacher induction program. A mixed method study using the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data on principals' perceptions of new teacher induction and their respective roles in it was utilized (Wood).

Findings from this study show that the level of principal participation in induction programs is related to the roles that they accept within the program (Wood, 2005). One role of the administrator is that of a "builder of culture." Most principals in the study had taken part in the professional development training with their new teachers. They supported the relationships between novice teachers and mentors, showing their value for the program itself (Wood). The positive actions and interactions of the principals within the school setting in relation to new teachers additionally helped improve the climates of the

schools. The induction process was viewed as a collective responsibility of the entire staff due to the principal's expectations and attitudes (Wood).

Principals were also supported as "instructional leaders" from the results of this study (Wood, 2005). About 25% of school administrators modeled lessons for new teachers. Administrators are expected to observe new teachers formally using formative assessment instruments that provide feedback to teachers on lesson delivery, classroom management suggestions, and strategies for student participation. Informal observations, or unannounced classroom visits, are conducted as well, allowing administrators opportunities to check on teacher performance in a less structured fashion (Wood). Regular feedback to new teachers was noted as necessary and needed by novice teachers concerning their instructional approaches, classroom knowledge, and classroom management techniques (Wood).

The third role noted as significant by this study was that of "facilitator of mentors" (Wood, 2005). While principals were not the coordinators of the mentoring program, they often functioned as the connection between the school and district. They were allowed and encouraged to match mentors with teachers; provide release time for

mentors and teachers to meet, plan, and work together; assist with the focus of collaboration toward improving student learning; and provide opportunities for staff development for new teachers (Wood).

Results from the study demonstrate that school administrators are vital to induction (Wood, 2005). Not only is support for the induction process needed, but also new teachers look to their principals for day-to-day relationships, the modeling of professional behaviors, the defining of roles and expectations, and support in a non-judgmental manner (Wood). When administrators meet these expectations, teachers can be encouraged by successes and can learn from their mistakes (Wood).

Ganser (2002) states that many principals serving in schools today had limited or no instruction on mentoring during their administrative training. He suggests ways in which practicing administrators can improve the mentoring situations at their schools. The first step in the process is to become knowledgeable about the components of teacher mentor programs, either at a local level or through workshops provided by professional organizations (Ganser). If a program is already operational within the school, the principal should become very familiar with it. The principal can then identify strengths and weaknesses of the

existing program and assist as needed changes are implemented. The principal should additionally share the guidelines of the established program with the staff and community, actively supporting its goals and procedures (Ganser).

Ganser (2002) specifies that one of the best decisions a school principal can make is to participate in the local training program for mentors. The opportunity to interact with new teachers, mentors, professional support staff, and fellow administrators will provide knowledge and skills needed to assist mentors and novice teachers at the school level (Ganser).

Principals can additionally support new teachers by allowing sufficient time for their mentors to serve effectively (Ganser, 2002). Teachers who have been identified as most qualified to be mentors are often requested to serve in other school capacities such as curriculum development committees or school leadership teams. If possible, mentors should be relieved of such time-consuming duties to allow them to meet and assist new teachers (Ganser).

Support for the role of the mentor, and in turn, the new teacher, can also be exhibited by the manner in which the principal respects the confidentiality of the mentor-

teacher relationship (Ganser, 2002). Principals should be cautious about asking how the new teacher is doing, even in casual conversation. The new teacher and mentor need to have a relationship built on trust in order for it to be as positive and productive as possible (Ganser).

Ganser (2002) cautions administrators of the danger that exists when too much emphasis is placed on the mentoring process. While important, he attributes the success of a new teacher to more than just successful completion of a mentoring program. He states that three factors contribute to new teacher success. First of all, teachers need to have the skills and knowledge for their work. The second factor needed is supportive workplace conditions. This includes, but is not limited to, the number of the students in the class, the abilities of the students, available resources, and instructional support. The third need includes all of the components of the induction process provided to new teachers throughout the year, not just the pre-school meetings and the assignment of a mentor teacher. Special meetings, school services, and the positive culture of the school are elements of support needed by new teachers (Ganser).

Watkins (2005) states that, due to the high yearly turnover rate of new teachers, the retention and

development of quality teachers should be a top priority for principals. Principals must promote a school environment that supports new teachers by encouraging them to have high expectations for student learning and by allowing them to control how they teach (Watkins). New teachers should become a part of a professional community of learners, working effectively in the classroom, using teaching strategies that meet the unique learner needs of the students, and participating in the total school community (Watkins). According to Fullan and Hargreaves (1996), a school that has a commitment to continuous professional learning will develop and enhance the abilities of all teachers to make a difference in the classroom throughout their careers. The school community must be willing to embrace and value the knowledge shared by new teachers (Watkins).

With an existing professional learning community in place, three activities must be included in a retention and induction program for new teachers based on Watkins' (2005) compilation of research. The program must match new teachers with strong mentors who are already a vital part of the learning community. Additionally, the program should support innovative ideas and practices through the use of action research. Finally, experienced and new staff, along

with the principal, must be actively engaged in collaboration and intense study groups (Watkins).

Watkins (2005) states that principals who wish to retain and assist in the development of new staff members should include these three approaches in school processes. The principal should support mentors as they assist new teachers, allowing them to use their training and expertise freely. Time for mentor/teacher meetings should be scheduled and planned, ensuring that the mentor's own teaching duties do not inhibit the time spent with the novice teacher (Watkins). The principal must support the staff as they complete action research and meet in study groups. Staff development that supports the research should be provided whenever possible. Involvement in the staff development and research process would also demonstrate the administrator's commitment to the research and study process (Watkins). Most importantly, the administrator should act upon any suggestions or recommendations that come out of the research completed by all staff members (Watkins).

Principals face many challenges as schools rise to meet both state and national standards. Retaining competent classroom teachers through induction programs that support the use of mentors can assist in the continuity of learning

and in increased student achievement (Watkins, 2005).

Continued research on the effectiveness of the principal in supporting new teachers through induction and mentoring programs is needed to add to this body of knowledge.

Summary

Beginning teacher induction and mentoring programs can improve the retention rates of teachers by providing the support, training, and guidance needed by new teachers. Programs have been shown to be effective when trained mentors work closely with new teachers under the leadership of an involved school administrator. Additional research is needed to determine the value of current procedures and practices through the use of beginning teacher and mentor programs. This program evaluation provides relevant data to add to this body of knowledge by examining the identified Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The retention rate of beginning teachers is an increasing concern for educators across the country (NCTAF, 2002). As school systems strive to fill classrooms with qualified teachers, increased efforts to provide support for new educators have resulted in the implementation of teacher induction programs (Barnett et al., 2002; Colgan, 2004; Curran & Goldrick, 2002; Wood, 2005).

Program Evaluation Model

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of a Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program. A management-oriented program evaluation approach was used. Using such a method enables the administrators of the program to determine whether or not good decisions are being made within the program. The evaluation was a formative evaluation, as its purpose was to obtain information that can be used to improve the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Stufflebeam determined in the 1960's that evaluation approaches at that time were lacking and developed the CIPP Evaluation Model in an effort to improve the process (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). He established a framework for use during the evaluation process with which administrators could make more effective decisions. His management-

oriented evaluation approach enabled the researcher to analyze four various types of decisions in relation to the program.

Context Evaluation

Using Context Evaluation, the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program was examined to determine the conditions under which the program was conducted. Goals and objectives for the program were examined. Information was gathered through interviews with the program facilitator and director of personnel regarding state requirements for beginning teacher induction programs; the identified needs of beginning teachers as determined by the program director, system, and state; available assets and resources for use within the program; and any problems identified using current practices. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed by the researcher.

Transcriptions were color coded according to identified themes. The frequencies of identified themes were tallied. Themes were considered a strong response when occurring five or more times, a moderate response when occurring three to four times, a weak response when occurring one to two times, and of no relation when not occurring during the interview process. Additional information was obtained from the Beginning Teacher,

Mentor, and Administrator Survey (see Appendix A); responses from items 1 through 12 related to the current conditions of the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program. Using a Likert scale from 0 to 4 with "strongly agree" designated as a 4, "agree" as a 3, "disagree" as a 2, "strongly disagree" as 1, and "neither agree nor disagree" as a 0, the average response of each item was calculated. An average score of 3 to 4 was considered a strong response, a score of 2 to 2.9 was considered a moderate response, and a score of 1 to 1.9 was considered a weak response. According to Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002), the comparison of several sources of data confirms the strengths or weaknesses of findings. Data gathered will answer the question: What are the current conditions that require the implementation of this program?

Input Evaluation

Input Evaluation, which assists managers and administrators in making decisions based on the structure of the program, helps to determine what resources are available. The key questions of focus in this area were: (a) What is the school system doing in its Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program?, (b) What resources are being used?, and (c) What is being provided to new teachers in an effort to build support and assistance? Answers to these

questions were determined by an interview with the program facilitator, focus groups interviews, and a survey given to beginning teachers, mentors, and school administrators. Factual information gathered about program components is reported in narrative form including details about the program's annual budget. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed by the researcher. Transcriptions were color coded and analyzed according to the frequency of themes identified in the conversations. The frequency of responses was tallied and recorded.

As noted earlier, themes were considered a strong response when occurring 5 or more times, a moderate response when occurring 3 to 4 times, a weak response when occurring 1 to 2 times, and of no relation if not occurring during the interview process. Additional information was obtained from beginning teacher, mentor, and school administrator responses from items 1 through 12 on the survey instrument related to Mentor Support as well as items 1 through 12 related to Principal Support. Using a Likert scale from 0 to 4, the average response of each item was calculated. An average score of 3 to 4 was considered a strong response, a score of 2 to 2.9 was considered a moderate response, and a score of 1 to 1.9 was considered a weak response.

Process Evaluation

The third area of the CIPP model, Process Evaluation, examined whether or not the established processes of the program were being followed. Information about the implementation of program components were collected through individual interviews; focus group interviews; document review of materials provided to teachers; the Beginning Teacher, Mentor, and Principal Survey; and a Beginning Teacher Questionnaire (see Appendix B). Themes from the interviews were considered a strong response when occurring 5 or more times, a moderate response when occurring 3 to 4 times, and a weak response when occurring 1 to 2 times. Surveys were analyzed by determining central tendencies of responses by particular groups of participants.

Questionnaire results were reviewed and the percent of positive responses for each item were determined. Results were analyzed using triangulation to determine answers to questions such as: (a) Are mentors meeting regularly with teachers and providing needed support?, (b) Are meetings being held to assist new teachers throughout the school year?, (c) Are opportunities for relevant staff development sessions being provided for new teachers?, and (d) Are administrators providing support for these new educators?

Product Evaluation

The final area of the CIPP model, Product Evaluation, collects information as to whether or not the intended goals of the program were met. The question addressed was: Are more teachers being retained as a result of participation in the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program? The retention rate of initially-licensed teachers who have participated in this program was determined through information provided by the Program Director. Quantitative data from surveys as well as qualitative data collected through interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires was analyzed to measure the total effectiveness of the program. Identified, recurring themes from all sources have been analyzed in narrative form. The validity of the data has been determined through triangulation, comparing findings from all sources, and determining the strengths of the identified themes. Ary et al. (2002) state that credibility of findings can be determined when various sources are used to analyze qualitative data through triangulation.

Limited funding was needed to complete this program evaluation. Surveys were made accessible through the school system's interschool mail service. Email was used to contact participants in order to set up focus group and individual interviews. An audio recorder was required for

recording focus groups and interviews.

Participants

The target population for the program evaluation of the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program included all teachers who were initially licensed or new to the teaching profession, employed in the identified school system, and participants in the program from the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years. Additionally the mentors of the targeted beginning teachers and school-based administrators were included as participants in the study as well as the Director of Personnel and the Program Facilitator.

Methods

The study employed a program evaluation approach utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data. As noted previously, participants were surveyed using an instrument designed to measure, using Likert scales, the various components of the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program including program components, mentor support, and principal support. The survey was validated with a pilot test using responses from teachers who completed their first year of teaching during the 2005-2006 school year who were still currently employed. When surveys were returned, two career teachers reviewed responses and determined if the questions addressed the research questions identified in the study.

Needed adjustments were made in survey and questionnaire items. The survey was then distributed through the interoffice mail service provided by the school system and sent to all teachers who completed their first year in classroom instruction during the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years as well as their mentors and school administrators. Addresses of teachers who had been employed during the 2006-2007 school year but were no longer a part of the system were gathered. Surveys and questionnaires were mailed to these individuals with return envelopes provided. Answers from the survey were entered into the SPSS system for data analysis. Results generated included percentages and means and provided information about the central tendency of the identified groups.

An open-ended questionnaire was provided to allow respondents the opportunity to provide detailed recommendations and criticisms. A pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted using respondents from the 2005-2006 new teacher population that were not included in the study. After the questionnaire responses were returned, two career teachers were asked to review responses and identify whether or not the specific questions address the research questions for the study. The questionnaire was adjusted and then mailed through interoffice mail to all

participants of the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 programs with instructions on return procedures. Results were coded and analyzed by the percent of positive responses for each noted theme.

Focus group interviews were conducted with new teachers across the elementary and secondary grade levels from the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 programs. An attempt was made to interview as many eligible participants as possible through scheduled group meetings at school sites. Participants were given the neutral prompt "Please describe the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program" to begin discussion about the established program. Interactions were recorded and transcribed. Responses were coded and sorted according to categories or themes so that patterns could be ascertained. A limitation of using focus groups and interviews is that anonymity is not possible for participants.

Methodological triangulation was used by analyzing the collected data from multiple sources. Common themes, patterns, and relationships were identified and coded. Results were tabulated using frequency tables from data collected through interviews, focus group interviews, surveys, and questionnaires. Data were analyzed, reviewing dominant themes that became evident from various sources

and procedures. According to Ary et al. (2002), the combination of methods using qualitative research results in stronger evidence of credibility. Narrative form has been used to disseminate all findings.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the identified Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentor Program using the CIPP model for program evaluation (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Results of the study will add to the body of knowledge surrounding the retention of teachers through new teacher induction programs. Practices identified as favorable in improving teacher retention can be reviewed and replicated in systems faced with similar difficulties. Those shown to be ineffective or detrimental to teacher retention can be eliminated or revised in an effort to improve new teacher induction programs. Such improvements may reduce operational costs, improve student learning and achievement, and ensure that quality teachers are retained for the instruction of future leaders (Andrews & Martin, 2003; Barnett et al., 2002; Heller, 2004).

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The retention of teachers has become a concern for educators across the United States in recent years (NCTAF, 2002). Research indicates that, while colleges and universities graduate sufficient numbers of education majors to meet the needs of school systems, educators are not remaining active in schools and are leaving the profession at an excessive rate (Ingersoll, 2003; NCTAF). In response to the increasing retention rate, many school systems have implemented teacher induction programs to provide support for beginning teachers during their first few years of teaching (Colgan, 2004; Curran & Goldrick, 2002; Joftus & Maddox-Dolan, 2002).

The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine the effectiveness of a Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program currently being used in a county school system located in western North Carolina. Using a management-oriented program evaluation approach based upon Stufflebeam's CIPP model (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004), the study examined the processes used within the program to prepare, assist, and retain beginning teachers. Data collected for the study was gathered in a variety of ways: (a) personal interviews with the Director of Personnel in

the school system; (b) personal interviews with the Program Facilitator; (c) focus group interviews with beginning teachers from two elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools; (d) surveys distributed to all beginning teachers from the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years, mentors of these beginning teachers, and school principals from all county schools; (e) open-ended questionnaires distributed to all beginning teachers from the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years; and (f) analysis of information provided by the Director of Personnel on North Carolina state guidelines for mentoring.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What are the current conditions that require the implementation of this program?
2. What is the school system doing in its Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program to provide new teachers with support and assistance?
3. Are established processes (such as mentor meetings, staff development sessions, administrator support) being followed to support beginning teachers?
4. What is the impact of the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program on teacher retention?

Responses to questions and analysis of data are reported within the chapter.

Description of the Sample

The population for this study consisted of beginning teachers employed in the school system of focus during the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years, designated mentors for these teachers, principals at the school locations, the Program Facilitator, and the Director of Personnel. All identified beginning teachers, designated mentors, and principals were provided a survey which consisted of a 31-item Likert scale questionnaire. One hundred eighteen surveys were provided to beginning teachers. Fifty-six were returned with a 47.4% return rate. One hundred five surveys were mailed to mentors. Sixty-five responded at a rate of 61.9%. Twenty-eight surveys were provided to administrators. Nineteen principals returned these for a 67.8% response rate.

A total of 251 surveys were provided to beginning teachers, mentors, and school principals. One hundred forty were returned with an overall response rate of 55.78%.

In addition, beginning teachers were given the opportunity to respond to an open-ended questionnaire. One hundred eighteen questionnaires were distributed. Fifty-four were returned with a response rate of 47.7%.

Sites for focus group interviews were chosen by determining the elementary, middle, and high schools with the largest numbers of beginning teachers currently employed. Since participation was voluntary, the assumption was that more individuals would choose to participate in the interview sessions thereby providing input from a greater number of individuals.

Interview sessions with the Program Facilitator and Director of Personnel were conducted separately.

Analysis of Data

The interview transcripts from sessions with the Director of Personnel and Program Facilitator were used to analyze the current practices in place for the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program. Both were questioned as to why the system has developed a beginning teacher program. Responses and data provided answer the research question: What are the current conditions that require the implementation of this program?

Director of Personnel

The Director of Personnel stated that North Carolina began an initiative in the 1980's to provide support for beginning teachers during their first 3 years of employment. While the requirements have evolved and changed over the years, the state now requires an induction system

to ensure this support takes place as well as mandates a mentor for each beginning teacher during the first 3 years of employment. A salary supplement of \$100 per month is provided to the mentor for the first 2 years of support to the beginning teacher. Additionally, an individual growth plan for each beginning teacher must be developed to assist with their professional development. New teachers meet with their mentors and establish goals for the year. Personal strengths and weaknesses are noted on the plan. Beginning teachers must be observed a minimum of four times yearly over a period of 3 years with teachers receiving an at standard rating or higher in all areas of performance in order to be converted from a standard professional level one to a standard professional level two (R. Wilson, personal communication, May 7, 2008).

Additionally, the Director stated that beginning teachers needed assistance with classroom management, motivation of students, dealing with diversity, individual differences, assessment of student work, relationships with parents, and the organization of the classroom. Mentors were noted as being able to provide help in all of these areas (R. Wilson, personal communication, May 7, 2008).

When questioned as to why a beginning teacher and mentor program was in place in the Cleveland County School

System, he stated:

The whole process is to have a support system for beginning teachers and the need being that these folks come out of college and they've done their student teaching, but they need that support during those first three years with a mentor being assigned to assist them. (R. Wilson, personal communication, May 7, 2008)

In the interview with the Director of Personnel concerning the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program, state requirements for the program were noted 14 times with a strength code of strong. The teacher turnover rate was mentioned 5 times with a strength code of strong. Increasing teacher effectiveness was referenced 9 times with a strength code of strong. Transition into teaching was noted 12 times with a strength code of strong. In addition, teacher expectations were cited 7 times with a strength code of strong.

When asked if the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program impacts the retention of teachers, the Director of Personnel stated:

I do think the program has helped us retain those people because the support is not only from Donna (the Program Facilitator), it's from the mentors, the

administrators and the school. Our administrators value the program; they see the benefits of the program. (R. Wilson, personal communication, May 7, 2008)

He also shared that he felt a shortcoming of the program was that the state required that each beginning teacher have a mentor for 3 years, yet only funded the mentor for 2 years. In his opinion, additional funding should be provided for the third year of mentoring (R. Wilson, personal communication, May 7, 2008).

Program Facilitator

The Program Facilitator, interviewed at a separate time, shared that the state of N.C. requires beginning teachers who have completed an approved beginning teacher program to participate in 3 days of new teacher training and lateral entry teachers (those who have entered the profession without completing a teacher education program) to complete 10 days of training before the first day of working with students (D. Suttle, personal communication, July 15, 2008).

When asked what conditions exist that require such a program, the Program Facilitator stated:

I think we do it because it's the right thing to do for the profession, number one-the right thing to

support teachers so that it, in fact, impacts student learning. And that's the basic thing for doing it, to make them successful and students successful.

(D. Suttle, personal communication, July 15, 2008)

The facilitator explained that the state does not regulate the components of the training sessions, leaving these to the discretion of the local education agency. Decisions about program sessions have been made at the central office level with input from teachers who have completed the sessions in recent years. Revisions and additions to the program have also been made as determined by central office personnel using feedback from administrators, mentors, and best practices from research (D. Suttle, personal communication, July 15, 2008).

Beginning teachers are introduced to district leaders at one of the opening sessions who share their own roles and responsibilities. Such introductions aid beginning teachers as they have needs to seek out these individuals for assistance. Supplementary sessions currently include staff development on the individual growth plan, the management of instructional time, the management of student behavior, the evaluation processes, and the standard course of study. Teachers meet their mentors, are provided a school tour by the principal or designee, and are allowed

to spend a portion of the day at their assigned schools (D. Suttle, personal communication, July 15, 2008).

In addition, experienced teachers from across the county are invited to attend one of the before-school meetings to serve on a panel. These teachers share their prior experiences as a beginning teacher. New teachers are able to ask questions and participate in a discussion with these experienced educators (D. Suttle, personal communication, July 15, 2008).

Monthly meetings are also held throughout the first 3 years to assist teachers with in-depth assistance in areas introduced at the opening induction sessions. During these meetings, teachers are grouped together with those who teach in similar areas, if possible. Such time provides teachers the opportunity to discuss issues that may be relevant to their particular situations. The Program Facilitator noted that new teachers favored such discussion groups because of the chance to collaborate with each other. Even with such efforts to provide time for teachers to talk, special area teachers may find themselves with no one in their particular fields. These educators are grouped into a "special area" group since many of their concerns and issues are similar (D. Suttle, personal communication, July 15, 2008).

Acknowledging that beginning teachers are often challenged by classroom management issues, an important session is planned for first year teachers around October of their first year. During this monthly meeting, role-playing with particular classroom scenarios and discussion on how things could be handled more effectively take place. Teachers are provided with classroom management tips that can be used in their own situations. Each new teacher's mentor completes an assessment on the beginning teacher's classroom management prior to the session. Then the beginning teachers complete the same assessments of themselves. Results are compared to identify areas of concern and plan strategies for improvement (D. Suttle, personal communication, July 15, 2008).

Near the end of the first school year, a "Showcasing Best Practices" session is held. Beginning teachers are asked to bring in multiple copies of the best lesson completed during the year. Lessons are shared in small groups and teachers return to their sites with eight or nine effective lessons which can be used or adapted for use in their own classrooms (D. Suttle, personal communication, July 15, 2008).

At the close of the school year, a Beginning Teacher Celebration is held. First year teachers, their mentors,

and school administrators are invited to a dinner. All are honored and recognized through a slide show presentation, the presentation of a plaque certifying completion of the first year of teaching, the sharing of an individual gift, and the dispersion of many door prizes (D. Suttle, personal communication, July 15, 2008).

The Program Facilitator shared that the budget provided for the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program was around \$10,000 and was a part of local funding. Mentor pay and teacher pay for the first 3 days of the induction program are supplied through the state budget (D. Suttle, personal communication, July 15, 2008).

In the interview with the Program Facilitator, the theme of state requirements for such a program was identified 10 times with a strength code of strong. The teacher turnover rate was mentioned 6 times for strength code of strong. Cited 4 times, the impact on teacher effectiveness was assigned a strength code of moderate. Transition into teaching was referenced 11 times with a strength code of strong. Comments about teacher expectations surfaced 6 times in the interview with a strength code of strong.

Document Review

Documents supplied by the Director of Personnel

included current state board policies related to beginning teacher support programs dated August 3, 2006. Review of the documents supported information shared by both the Director of Personnel and the Program Facilitator. According to the North Carolina State Board of Education (NCSBE) (1999-2004) Policy Manual ID Number QP-A-004, a Beginning Teacher Support Program is required by the North Carolina State Board of Education. In order to obtain a continuing Standard Professional 2 license, all initially-licensed teachers must complete a 3 year induction period. A formal orientation program, mentor support, and observations and evaluations must comprise this program.

Each initially-licensed teacher must collaborate with the principal and mentor teacher to develop an Individual Growth Plan. The plan requires that goals and strategies focus on improving needed skills based on the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Standards (INTASC). Periodically during the school year, the plan must be reviewed through assessment conferences to determine progress made toward the set goals. Individual Growth Plans are to be updated yearly during the 3 year process (NCSBE, 1999).

An orientation prior to the arrival of students is required for each beginning teacher. Minimum requirements

state that the process should include an overview of the goals, policies, and procedures of the school system; describe available services and opportunities for additional training; provide information on the process required to obtain a continuing license; and explain the teacher evaluation process, the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, local curriculum guides, the state's accountability program, the State Board's priorities and goals, and the safe use of restraint of students (NCSBE, 1999).

A trained mentor must be provided to each beginning teacher. This mentor should provide instructional and emotional support during the first critical years of teaching. Specific guidelines are established for the assignment of mentor teachers. A mentor teacher should have proven successful in his/her area of licensure and have positive recommendations from administrators and co-workers. The mentor should be willing to serve as a mentor and participate in all required trainings (NCSBE, 1999).

In addition, beginning teachers must be formally observed at least three times by a school administrator and once by a teacher annually. All observers must have completed appropriate training. While the assigned mentor may complete the beginning teacher observation, it is not a

requirement. Observations must be spaced periodically throughout the year and be at least 45 minutes in length. All observations must be followed by a post-conference (NCSBE, 1999).

Local Education Agencies (LEA) must develop a comprehensive Beginning Teacher Support Program. All plans are subject to approval by the local boards of education. Policy states that plans may be subject to review and on file at the LEA. Each LEA must also submit an annual report on its Beginning Teacher Support Program by October 1 of each year (NCSBE, 1999).

Audio recordings from interviews with the Program Facilitator and Director of Personnel were transcribed and the frequencies of themes were tabulated. Frequencies are displayed in Table 2. Overall strength codes as determined by the researcher are shown in Table 3.

Table 2

Frequency of Themes of Conditions That Require Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program

Themes	<u>Facilitator</u>	<u>Director</u>
State requirements	10	14
Teacher turnover rates	6	5
Teacher effectiveness	4	9
Transition into teaching	11	12
Teacher expectations	6	7

Table 3

Overall Strength Codes by Theme of Conditions That Require Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program

Themes	<u>Facilitator</u>	<u>Director</u>
State requirements	Strong	Strong
Teacher turnover rates	Strong	Strong
Teacher effectiveness	Moderate	Strong
Transition into teaching	Strong	Strong
Teacher expectations	Strong	Strong

Focus Group Interviews

In addition to the individual interviews with the Director of Personnel and the Program Facilitator, six focus group interviews were completed at school sites. Data collected from these interviews served to answer the research questions "What is the school system doing within

and outside the program to build support and assistance to beginning teachers?" and "What are the established processes of the program and are they being followed?"

Locations for school focus group interviews were chosen by the researcher after determining the elementary, middle, and high schools with the greatest numbers of beginning teachers from the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years. Since participation was voluntary, the researcher inferred that more teachers from these schools would chose to take part in the process. After receiving permission from site administrators, an invitation to participate was sent to the identified teachers via the school system's email program. An email reminder was sent on the day prior to school site interviews.

Each interview session began with a brief explanation of the total study and the neutral prompt, "Please describe the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program." While the number of teachers who participated in each session was recorded, names were not taken for reference. Teachers were assured that their responses would remain anonymous, allowing them to speak freely and honestly. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Transcriptions were color coded according to identified themes. Themes were considered a strong response when occurring five or more times, a moderate

response when occurring three to four times, a weak response when occurring one to two times and of no relation when not identified in the interview.

Focus Group 1 was one of two interviews that took place at the elementary level. Five teachers chose to participate in the discussion. Throughout the interview session, numerous responses indicated that the Beginning Teacher and Mentor program provided opportunities for teachers to prepare for the classroom. Teachers shared that sessions prior to the start of school helped "put it all together" as they began their first year of teaching. Several teachers described the pacing guides, the Standard Course of Study, and a notebook with important information and needed documents as helpful. One teacher noted that she was rather overwhelmed during some of the presentations, but was able to go back during the year and access information from the notebook necessary to meet her classroom and school system requirements. Another stated that she had just moved to this area of the state and that much of the information shared helped her as she adjusted to her new community.

Mentor support was an aspect of the program that was noted as extremely helpful by all of the teachers in the group. While some of the teachers had assigned mentors in

the school, one noted that hers worked at another school but shared the same content area. She said that the situation "worked out great" and that her mentor was "wonderful and very helpful." Another teacher stated that her mentor was in the grade level that preceded hers. She initially thought this difference might be a negative aspect for their relationship but found that it actually became a benefit. The mentor was able to assist her in meeting the needs of students whom she had already taught. Mentors were described as supportive, helpful, and available. One teacher expressed that mentor-teacher relationships were "great."

Additionally noted as positive by teachers from Focus Group 1 was the support received by the school's principal and assistant principal. The principal was described as "very supportive." One teacher stated that the administrators not only completed required observations but also conducted classroom walkthroughs regularly. Discussions related to walkthroughs were informal and "reliable." Another teacher noted that the principal had been available and supportive when needed. She said:

We had a couple of situations where a parent called the principal and said, "I want my child out of her room. That woman is too mean." She was very supportive

in the conference with the parent. She was very good and I felt that completely. In a situation where the parent initiated the conference she was very good.

In the interview transcript, references to the program's preparation for teaching were mentioned 15 times with a strength code of strong. Mentor support was expressed 11 times with a strength code of strong. Administrator support was noted 7 times and assigned a strength code of strong. Teachers in Focus Group 1 did not discuss any situations or experiences when assistance was given related to classroom management. Only one teacher expressed that she had received assistance in teaching techniques through participation in the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program.

Focus Group 2 was also comprised of teachers at the elementary level. Five beginning teachers participated in the interview process. After being provided the neutral prompt asking them to share about their experiences with the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program, the teachers spoke freely and positively about induction program components, support provided by their mentors and administrators, and preparation provided for understanding the evaluation process used by the school system.

One teacher stated that her experience had been very

beneficial. She noted that a great deal of information was shared in a short amount of time and that many valuable materials were provided to aid teachers with instructional needs. The notebook, also noted as beneficial by members of Focus Group 1, was described as full of resources that had been used throughout the school year. In addition, the content specific sessions provided worthwhile information. A teacher stated, "The break-out workshops were very specific; they were very helpful, even having already taught for a little while."

Another shared:

Well, I know one thing that didn't really get mentioned. It was difficult during that beginning year to go to those meetings every month and sit there. It was hard because you were tired, but I always came away with good information, good materials, and I still have it all in that big notebook.

All teachers within Focus Group 2 spoke positively about the support they'd received from the school principal. Within the interview, references to positive administrator support were given 15 times with a strength code of strong. One teacher noted that the principal visited her room almost daily during the first 2 weeks of school. She specifically asked how things were going and if

there was anything she needed. The principal was praised for having an open-door policy; teachers are welcome to go in and share both negative and positive concerns, as desired. One teacher said:

That makes a big difference to be able to know that you're comfortable with the principal, that you're going to get the good stuff, but that when the bad stuff does come, you'll be able to handle it because it's going from someone who cares about you and knows about you and knows enough to be able to ask beyond just the classroom.

Principal support with classroom management issues was noted positively as well. Referenced five times, this area received a strength code of strong. When classroom concerns had arisen, the school administrators were noted as dealing with situations promptly and efficiently. A second year teacher expressed her experience by sharing that:

I did call for a child to go up and I was waiting for a call from the office to come up and discuss it and nothing was questioned. That way I could take control of the classroom and still teach. They called the parent and took care of it and it was resolved-no questions asked from the teacher, no second guessing. They trust what you're doing in the classroom.

Both mentors and administrators were mentioned as assisting with and providing an understanding of the evaluation processes and requirements affecting beginning teachers. Referenced nine times, preparation for and understanding of the evaluation process was assigned a strength code of strong. Mentors were recognized as assisting with the development of the Individual Growth Plan. Concerning her mentor, one teacher said:

She sat down with me for about an hour and a half with the INTASC standards 'cause I had a lot of questions about what they were. She helped me pick out my weaknesses when she did my observation, what I needed to work on, what I needed to reflect back on, what progress I had made, and what to do for next year. So, she helped a lot on that.

When speaking about the principal and the evaluation process, another teacher shared that:

It's not just formal observations, but even the walkthroughs and the quick little snapshots that you're so used to there being someone watching you that it's not a big deal anymore. You know, my door opens and I look to see who it is and I just go on with what we're doing. It's always been good feedback, quick feedback. She'll point out, "I like this" or

"work on this", and it's good give-and-take and also very positive.

Another beginning teacher shared that:

They put a positive spin on it. It's not "you're a first year teacher so you don't do this and this." It's "you're a first year teacher and you're still learning, so this is what you need to work on for the next one." So it's not seen as you can't do it or you're not good at it; it's a very positive spin on things to do to improve.

Teachers in Focus Group 2 spoke highly of their mentors and the support they received from them. Mentors were noted as always being available to listen, share ideas, provide support, and help in any way. Mentor support was mentioned eight times in the interview process and assigned a strength code of strong. At the end of the interview, the teachers were asked if there was anything else they wanted to share. One teacher said:

I'm just glad they have mentors. I've done enough reading and I've got friends throughout the country who teach and it's pretty much you walk into a classroom and you're handed the materials, you know, and it's "Good luck!" so, it's nice to know that there's somebody in place to help you. And they know

what their purpose is. And you've got somebody you know that you can go to and talk to about whatever. I think it's a good thing.

Table 4 displays the frequencies of themes identified from elementary focus group interviews. Table 5 provides overall strength codes for elementary focus group interviews.

Table 4

Frequency of Themes in Elementary Focus Group Interviews on Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program Components

Themes	Focus Group	
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
Preparation for teaching	15	16
Understanding the evaluation process	8	9
Support with relationships	5	5
Help with management skills	0	5
Assistance with teaching techniques	1	7
Mentor support	11	8
Administrator support	7	15

Table 5

Overall Strength Codes by Themes in Elementary Focus Group Interviews on Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program Components

Themes	Focus Group	
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
Preparation for teaching	Strong	Strong
Understanding of the evaluation process	Strong	Strong
Support with relationships	Strong	Strong
Help with management skills	No relation	Strong
Assistance with teaching techniques	Weak	Strong
Mentor support	Strong	Strong
Administrator support	Strong	Strong

Focus Group 3 was conducted at the middle school level. Four teachers participated in the interview process. All teachers recognized the mentor relationship as positive with 19 references to it and a designated strength code of strong. One communicated that the most positive thing about the mentor program was the required regular meetings with mentors. He reported that he met at least once a week with his mentor to discuss concerns. If questions arose when not at school, the teacher called the mentor at home. On occasion, the mentor would even visit him at his home.

Another stated that her mentor had been supportive throughout the year. Along with regular meetings, she said she was available for questions at any time and was always quick to help her if needed. She said that the mentor component of the total program was its strongest part. Mentors were identified as assisting with classroom management concerns, developing the Individual Growth Plan (IGP), and providing information about general school procedures.

One teacher informed the researcher that the school administrator aided in the understanding of the evaluation process. While information about observations and the IGP had been provided in one of the opening sessions of the program, questions arose when implementation at the school level took place. The principal worked with the teacher one-on-one to explain the processes more clearly. Another teacher articulated that she was more comfortable having her mentor explain procedures related to evaluations. She stated:

I thought it was better to have your mentor explain it. She could sit down with you and say, "Here's what this is and here's what they'll be looking for." She has an idea of how the principal and assistant principal score them so she knows like, "Here's how

you're looking compared to me. This is what you should expect. This is where you want to be."

Teachers additionally explained the value found in the monthly meetings that took place during the school year. During these times, positive relationships were being built with teachers across the county who taught in the same subject areas but at different schools. In addition, the teachers were able to share and talk about what was taking place in their classrooms, discuss books they were using, obtain feedback from others, and evaluate what practices were really useful. The program's preparation for teaching received five frequency tallies and was assigned a strength code of strong.

Administrator support was noted eight times and assigned a strength code of strong. Teachers voiced that the principal was available to help, when needed, with concerns related to procedures. In regards to classroom management concerns, the principal was noted as providing support. One teacher stated, "My principal, he helped too. If I had a problem, he helped to get it straight, to figure out what would work."

Another teacher shared that he had a parent conference that quickly got out of hand during his first year. While he admitted that he was part of the problem, he shared that

he knew he needed help, so he stopped the meeting, got an administrator, and proceeded with the discussion successfully. Administrator support was identified 8 times in the interview and assigned a strength code of strong.

Focus Group 4 was held at a second middle school location in the county. Teachers promptly emphasized the value of the mentor-teacher relationship. One of the first comments made was, "My mentor was absolutely awesome every step of the way, to vent with, to encourage, to get ideas. It was awesome."

Another described her mentor as excellent in assisting with required paperwork. The mentor helped with new school system terminology and reminded her of things she needed to do. One teacher voiced praise for her mentor's support with lesson plans. She expressed that she was able to mirror the plans of her mentor, but would adjust it to meet the needs of her classroom. When problems arose, she could obtain needed assistance and advice from the mentor. Mentor support was mentioned 17 times during the interview and given a strength code of strong.

Several teachers noted support for classroom management needs. Working at a school with students whom often have challenging behaviors, adequate and prompt support from mentors and administrators was provided.

Frequent classroom visits and walkthroughs by administrators were identified as beneficial to classroom management. As suggestions to teachers were made about how to deal with specific classroom management concerns, return visits took place to see if improvements had occurred. With unruly and defiant students, the administrative staff had closely followed county guidelines, suspending students who were disrupting the learning environment for others. Teachers identified help with management skills a total of 10 times for a strength code of strong.

References to the program's preparation for teaching were mentioned eight times receiving a strength code of strong. One teacher shared that the most useful part of the program, in her opinion, was the panel of experienced teachers that met with new teachers at one of the pre-school sessions. She expressed her opinion by stating, "I think the most beneficial thing about the beginning induction program was the panel, just because they were in their year and they told you what they went through and they went through the ups and downs."

Another expressed appreciation for the introductory sessions held prior to the start of school. While she had taught school in the private sector, this was her first experience in public schools. She said everything was so

new to her. The induction meetings helped her as she began this transition.

Administrator support was identified as a theme eight times during the focus group interview. A strength code of strong was designated for this category. Teachers mentioned that positive feedback was provided when justified and that suggestions for improvement were also given in an encouraging manner. One teacher stated:

They were great about telling you the great things you did in your classroom and ways to improve. If there were any things that needed to be improved they would tell you how to do that. So I think that their observations were very beneficial.

Table 6 displays the frequencies of themes identified from middle school focus group interviews. Table 7 provides overall strength codes for middle school focus group interviews.

Table 6

*Frequency of Themes in Middle School Focus Group Interviews
on Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program Components*

Themes	Focus Group	
	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Preparation for teaching	5	8
Understanding the evaluation process	2	8
Support with relationships	3	2
Help with management skills	3	10
Assistance with teaching techniques	5	5
Mentor support	19	17
Administrator support	8	8

Table 7

Overall Strength Codes by Themes in Middle School Focus Group Interviews on Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program Components

Themes	Focus Group	
	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Preparation for teaching	Strong	Strong
Understanding of the evaluation process	Weak	Strong
Support with relationships	Moderate	Weak
Help with management skills	Strong	Strong
Assistance with teaching techniques	Strong	Strong
Mentor support	Strong	Strong
Administrator support	Strong	Strong

Two additional focus group interviews were conducted at the high school level. Focus Group 5 was comprised of three teachers. Administrator support was mentioned 23 times in the interview process and received a strength code of strong. The principal and assistant principals were all spoken of in positive ways and were praised for their guidance, support, and approachability. Teachers noted that the administrators would check on them to see how things were going. If assistance was needed, the administrators would help "point them in the right direction" in order to

accomplish the task at hand. A teacher shared that:

I have built these relationships, you know. I have played off this knowing that I could go to the principal right now and close the door and cry my eyes out if I'm frustrated. He'd pat me on the back and say, "It's alright." So, I've taken that response. It's trickled down from the top all the way to me and I do that with my students, you know. If I teach you, you can come and cry on my shoulder.

Mentor support was identified as a theme 15 times during the interview. A strength code of strong was given to describe this theme. Teachers expressed appreciation for assistance with lesson plans, making copies of needed items, being available when needed, meeting regularly, keeping them on track with things, and providing needed help and support. One teacher expressed his feelings about his mentor and staff by saying, "As for my mentor, I've got half a dozen mentors. My official mentor, she's a coach, so I see her periodically about all my paperwork. Then I meet daily with the other English teachers." A second teacher reiterated this view by stating, "They've all just been super supportive, checking in on us, the teachers here; I wouldn't want to work anywhere else."

The program's preparation for teaching occurred 14

times as a theme from the interview. Assigned a strength code of strong, the program was described as very positive, in-depth, and informative. Monthly meetings were mentioned as providing some helpful information. One teacher shared that at first he didn't like the meetings, but when they were over he said, "Is that all?" Another teacher expressed appreciation for the three-ring binder that was provided at the opening sessions. While filled with more information than could possibly be discussed during the week, the contents of the notebook were described as extremely helpful throughout the year. She said the notebook deserved an A plus.

Teachers in Focus Group 5 identified assistance with teaching techniques 12 times during the interview. This theme was assigned a strength code of strong. Staff members were noted for assisting beginning teachers with lesson plans, re-teaching needed skills for the classroom, and providing and sharing extra materials for instructional use. A teacher expressed appreciation for this assistance by stating, "I ask and they are so eager to help. I've never worked a job where people are so eager to help you be successful at what you do."

Another teacher shared that the monthly reflections required by the Program Facilitator were first considered

"a pain," but later viewed as beneficial in aiding with her teaching needs. She recorded in her journal writing that she was having difficulty with some Advanced Placement course issues. When her reflections were reviewed, the Program Facilitator put her in contact with other teachers in the county that provided needed assistance. She said, "So a lot of the things that at first give the appearance, 'I can't believe we're doing this!' turn out to be helpful."

Focus Group 6 was conducted at a second high school in the county. Seven teachers chose to be participants in the interview process. Administrator support was mentioned more frequently than any other theme during this interview for a total of 20 times. A strength code of strong was assigned to this theme. Teacher input indicated that the principal was visible, approachable, and a problem solver. While noted that every administrator at the school was different, the combination of the administrative team was described as excellent. Each one was viewed as having different strengths but as complementing the other administrators. One teacher shared a situation in which the principal had solved a problem for her. She stated:

What I really appreciated, I think it was the third week of school, I had this class of 25 that I could

not get a handle on. I finally went to the principal one day almost in tears and I said, "I don't know what to do." She immediately pulled the class list, looked it over, and said, "This is a tough combination; these two should not be together." Two days later, four of the kids that were in that classroom had been transferred to other classes and four others came in from other classes. I mean, she immediately changed the dynamics of the classroom. And she had the keys to do that.

Another shared her thoughts about the support received from the principal in regards to expectations. She explained:

The high expectations she has for students are the same expectations she has for teachers. I appreciate that. I find it quite refreshing that the expectations here are high. So, I like her and her standards and expectations. She expects that of everybody, herself included. There is not anything that she would ask her staff to do that she is not willing to do.

Other comments from teachers in Focus Group 6 indicated that the principal was supportive in her observations of beginning teachers, providing constructive feedback after observations.

The theme of mentor support was identified 13 times during the interview and assigned a strength code of strong. Teachers expressed gratitude for the support provided by their mentors. Several teachers noted the frequency of contacts stating that they met daily to talk and discuss whatever concerns were at hand. One beginning teacher had completed his student teaching under the leadership of his mentor. Their planning periods were the same for the year so they were able to spend quality time together. He described their relationship as being like brothers. Another teacher actually taught two of her classes in her mentor's classroom. She received almost daily feedback and help from her mentor that she described as very helpful.

In addition to mentor support, mentors were also noted as providing support with other school relationships. Mentioned 10 times, this theme was assigned a strength code of strong. One teacher explained that her mentor had actually let her listen to some of her phone calls to parents. Such modeling had assisted the beginning teacher as she has sought to develop positive relationships with the parents of her students. Another teacher said her mentor made her call her parents. While she didn't really want to do this, she expressed that it had been a positive

thing to do. Her mentor also reminded her to call parents when the situation warranted a phone call home. Additional references to support with relationships included comments about how the required meetings allowed new teachers to build relationships with teachers from other schools. The following quote from a new teacher sums up the feelings of support found at this school. She expressed, "I could probably go anywhere and teach because I teach science. But I don't want to go anywhere because I am happy and I have good people in place to help me be successful."

Table 8 displays the frequencies of themes identified from high school focus group interviews. Table 9 provides overall strength codes for high school focus group interviews.

Table 8

*Frequency of Themes in High School Focus Group Interviews
on Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program Components*

Themes	Focus Group	
	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
Preparation for teaching	14	5
Understanding the evaluation process	3	3
Support with relationships	10	10
Help with management skills	6	9
Assistance with teaching techniques	12	18
Mentor support	15	13
Administrator support	23	20

Table 9

Overall Strength Codes by Themes in High School Focus Group Interviews on Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program Components

Themes	Focus Group	
	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
Preparation for teaching	Strong	Strong
Understanding of the evaluation process	Moderate	Moderate
Support with relationships	Strong	Strong
Help with management skills	Strong	Strong
Assistance with teaching Techniques	Strong	Strong
Mentor support	Strong	Strong
Administrator support	Strong	Strong

Survey

As noted previously, a 31-item Likert scale survey was mailed to participants (identified teachers, mentors, and school principals) through interoffice mail. One hundred eighteen surveys were provided to beginning teachers. Fifty-six were returned with a 47.4% return rate. One hundred five surveys were mailed to mentors. Sixty-five responded at a rate of 61.9%. Twenty-eight surveys were provided to administrators. Nineteen principals returned these for a 67.8% response rate. A total of 251 surveys

were provided to beginning teachers, mentors, and school principals. One hundred forty were returned with an overall response rate of 55.78%.

Data collected from the surveys provided information to answer the research questions "What is the school system doing within and outside the program to build support and assistance to beginning teachers?" and "What are the established processes of the program and are they being followed?" Survey items were divided into three main groups with questions focusing on the three areas of the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program: the program itself, mentor support, and principal support.

It should be noted that beginning teachers were the only group surveyed that actually took part in all sessions provided prior to the start of school and throughout the school year. Mentors and administrators attended at least one session, and were provided information about the additional sessions that took place during the before-school sessions and in monthly meetings scheduled throughout the year. Teacher responses, therefore, represent actual feedback through participation; mentor and principal responses for these survey items represent perceived responses through awareness of session components and intended preparation of the beginning teacher through

participation in the program. Percentages of 4 (strongly agree) and 3 (agree) responses have been provided in Table 10.

Questions 1 through 12 focused specifically on the components of the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program which occurred during the before-school sessions. As indicated in Table 10, question 9, results from the survey indicated that a high percentage of teachers, mentors, and principals felt that the program's cooperative activities were beneficial to beginning teachers (90.7%, 87.5%, and 89.4% respectively). Beginning teachers reported benefits from the program in the understanding of teacher performance expectations (83.7%), the understanding of the INTASC standards (81.5%), and assistance in easing the transition into teaching (78.6%). Lower percentages from teachers were reflected for survey items on understanding the district's mission and goals (63.6%), understanding the roles and responsibilities of key district leaders (66.1%), and the provision of assistance with lesson planning (68.5%).

An analysis of responses by mentors and principals indicates that the percentage of one and two responses by these groups was considerably higher than those given by the beginning teachers. The percentage of one and two

responses by mentors for survey items related to the induction program sessions ranged from 70.3% to 95.2%. Principal responses ranged from 73.7% to 100% on the same survey items. As noted previously, only beginning teachers were actual participants in the induction sessions.

Table 10

Responses to Survey Questions 1-12, Beginning Teacher Induction Program Section, by Specific Groups

Survey Question Theme	Percentage of 3 & 4 Responses		
	<u>Teachers</u> n=56	<u>Mentors</u> n=65	<u>Principals</u> n=19
1. Ease in transition	78.6	79.7	94.7
2. Roles and responsibilities	66.1	75.0	84.2
3. Provide state information	74.6	84.4	89.4
4. Teacher performance expectations	83.7	93.7	94.7
5. State policies	72.7	78.2	73.7
6. Classroom management	69.1	76.2	89.5
7. Teaching techniques	70.9	75.1	78.9
8. District's mission and goals	63.6	70.3	79.0
9. Cooperative activities	90.7	87.5	89.4
10. INTASC Standards explanation	81.5	85.7	84.2
11. NCSCS explanation	75.9	95.2	100
12. Lesson planning	68.5	90.7	100

In addition to an evaluation of the percentages of three and four responses, the central tendencies for survey items 1 through 12 by specific groups was determined through data analysis. Table 9 displays the central tendencies, by group, of responses to items related to the induction sessions. As noted previously, a strength code of strong was designated for a mean score of 3 to 4, a strength code of moderate was assigned for a mean score of 2 to 2.9, and a strength code of weak was given to a mean score of 1 to 1.9. Table 10 illustrates assignments of strength codes for means of responses to items 1 to 12 from the section of survey items on the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program sessions. Beginning teacher responses to survey items indicated a strong response to the cooperative activities incorporated into the program sessions. All other survey items received a mean score between 2.27 and 2.85 and were assigned a strength code of moderate.

An analysis of the central tendencies for survey items 1 to 12 by mentors indicated strong responses for program components related to teacher performance expectations, cooperative activities, lesson planning, and explanations of both INTASC standards and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCS). Remaining items received a strength code of moderate with mean scores ranging from

2.53 to 2.80.

Central tendencies for principal responses were higher than those of beginning teachers and mentors. Survey items related to cooperative activities, explanations of the INTASC standards, the NCSCS, and state information, lesson planning, classroom management, and ease in transition into the classroom all had mean scores higher than 3.0 and received strength codes of strong. Remaining items received mean scores of 2.58 to 2.95 and were assigned strength codes of moderate.

Table 11

Central Tendencies of Survey Items 1-12, Beginning Teacher Induction Program Section, by Specific Groups

Survey Question Theme	Mean by Group		
	<u>Teachers</u> n=56	<u>Mentors</u> n=65	<u>Principals</u> N=19
1. Ease in transition	2.73	2.80	3.53
2. Roles and responsibilities	2.41	2.53	2.95
3. Provide state information	2.55	2.80	3.05
4. Teacher performance expectations	2.85	3.23	3.37
5. State policies	2.53	2.53	2.63
6. Classroom management	2.58	2.79	3.21
7. Teaching techniques	2.71	2.63	2.79
8. District's mission and goals	2.27	2.56	2.58
9. Cooperative activities	3.13	3.08	3.58
10. INTASC Standards explanation	2.80	3.11	3.11
11. NCSCS explanation	2.74	3.43	3.68
12. Lesson planning	2.50	3.25	3.58

Table 12

Overall Strength Codes for Central Tendencies of Survey Items 1-12, Beginning Teacher Induction Program Section, by Specific Groups

Survey Question Theme	Strength Code by Group		
	<u>Teachers</u> n=56	<u>Mentors</u> n=65	<u>Principals</u> N=19
1. Ease in transition	Moderate	Moderate	Strong
2. Roles and responsibilities	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
3. Provide state information	Moderate	Moderate	Strong
4. Teacher performance expectations	Moderate	Strong	Strong
5. State policies	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
6. Classroom management	Moderate	Moderate	Strong
7. Teaching techniques	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
8. District's mission and goals	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
9. Cooperative activities	Strong	Strong	Strong
10. INTASC Standards explanation	Moderate	Strong	Strong
11. NCSCS explanation	Moderate	Strong	Strong
12. Lesson planning	Moderate	Strong	Strong

The second section of the survey administered to

beginning teachers, mentors, and principals contained questions related to the support given to new teachers by their designated mentors. Survey question 1 specifically asked about the regularity of mentor meetings. As noted in Table 13, all three groups surveyed responded positively that such meetings were taking place with percentages of one and two responses well above 90%. Questions 2, 4, 7, 9 and 12 asked about specific kinds of support provided by the mentor for the beginning teacher related to school and classroom needs such as help at the start of school, assistance with paperwork and problems, mentoring activities, and the use of instructional strategies. Table 13 shows that in all of these areas, teachers, mentors, and principals responded with over 90% of three and four responses.

Items 3, 6, and 8 were questions that asked about support with relationships at school, in the community, and with key personnel in the school system. The percentage of three and four responses from beginning teachers for all three of these items ranged from 82.2 to 87.3. Responses to the same items from mentors and principals were higher, indicating their perceptions of support were greater than those of the teachers. Question 11 requested input as to the level of encouragement for professional growth provided

by mentors to beginning teachers. While percentages of three and four responses from teachers were found to be 83.9%, mentors indicated higher perceived levels of support at 96.9. Likewise, principals responded with 94.7% of three and four responses.

Table 14 displays the central tendencies of each group (teacher, mentor, and principal) as related to the mentor support section of the survey. The mean for question 10 from the beginning teacher surveys, referencing the support with relationships provided by the mentor for the beginning teacher, was determined to be 2.96. All other responses to questions by the three groups were found to have a mean greater than 3.00. Strength codes for central tendencies are found in Table 15. All strength codes were found to be designated as strong except for question 10, noted above, which had a strength code defined as moderate.

Table 13

*Responses to Survey Questions 1-12, Mentor Support Section,
by Specific Groups*

Survey Question Theme	Percentage of 3 & 4 Responses		
	<u>Teachers</u> n=56	<u>Mentors</u> n=65	<u>Principals</u> n=19
1. Regular mentor meetings	94.5	95.4	94.7
2. Help at start of school	90.9	98.4	100
3. Key personnel introductions	87.3	100	94.8
4. Assistance with paperwork	96.3	100	94.7
5. Help with professional expectations	88.0	98.4	100
6. Support with relationships	92.9	98.4	100
7. Assistance with problems	92.9	98.5	100
8. Helps get to know community	85.7	96.9	94.8
9. Supports with mentoring activities	91.0	98.6	94.7
10. Helps with relationships	82.2	92.3	84.2
11. Encourages professional growth	83.9	96.9	94.7
12. Assists with use of strategies	92.9	96.9	94.7

Table 14

Central Tendencies of Survey Items 1-12, Mentor Support Section, by Specific Groups

Survey Question Theme	Mean by Group		
	Teachers n=56	Mentors n=65	Principals n=19
1. Regular mentor meetings	3.41	3.43	3.47
2. Help at start of school	3.42	3.69	3.68
3. Key personnel introductions	3.22	3.69	3.58
4. Assistance with paperwork	3.51	3.54	3.37
5. Help with professional expectations	3.21	3.60	3.68
6. Support with relationships	3.27	3.49	3.53
7. Assistance with problems	3.32	3.58	3.68
8. Helps get to know community	3.13	3.43	3.32
9. Supports with mentoring activities	3.21	3.54	3.42
10. Helps with relationships	2.96	3.20	3.21
11. Encourages professional growth	3.13	3.28	3.11
12. Assists with use of strategies	3.27	3.48	3.53

Table 15

Overall Strength Codes for Central Tendencies of Survey Items 1-12, Mentor Support Section, by Specific Groups

Survey Question Theme	Strength Code by Group		
	<u>Teachers</u> n=56	<u>Mentors</u> n=65	<u>Principals</u> n=19
1. Regular mentor meetings	Strong	Strong	Strong
2. Help at start of school	Strong	Strong	Strong
3. Key personnel introductions	Strong	Strong	Strong
4. Assistance with paperwork	Strong	Strong	Strong
5. Help with professional expectations	Strong	Strong	Strong
6. Support with relationships	Strong	Strong	Strong
7. Assistance with problems	Strong	Strong	Strong
8. Helps get to know community	Strong	Strong	Strong
9. Supports with mentoring activities	Strong	Strong	Strong
10. Helps with relationships	Moderate	Strong	Strong
11. Encourages professional growth	Strong	Strong	Strong
12. Assists with use of strategies	Strong	Strong	Strong

The final section of questions on the survey administered to beginning teachers, mentors, and principals contained seven items which related to the support provided beginning teachers by school-based administrators. The

percentage of three and four responses recorded by principals to all questions was 100% and is shown in Table 16. Questions 1 and 2 focused on the school orientation process and introductions to relevant school personnel. While teachers responded with 89.1 and 87.3 percent of three and four answers, respectively, mentors' perceptions were lower. Mentors scored principal support for orientation and introductions at 79.4 and 77.8 respectively. Questions 2 and 3 referred to the observation process and the provision of prompt feedback. As noted in Table 16, all groups had percentages of three and four answers over 90%. Survey item 6 asked respondents if the school principal supported the classroom management efforts of the beginning teacher. While teachers responded with 83.6% of three and four responses, mentors replied with 76.2. When asked if the principal was available when needed, mentors answered 84.1% and teachers with 90.9% of three and four responses.

Table 17 illustrates the central tendencies for survey items 1 through 7 related to principal support. Strength codes assigned to central tendencies follows in Table 18. Central tendencies for responses by teachers were all greater than 3.0 and given strength codes of strong. Central tendencies for responses by principals were all

greater than 3.0 with item 3, that of providing four or more observations of beginning teachers per year, receiving a mean of 4.00. Strength codes for central tendencies of responses by principals were all given the assignment of strong. Mentor responses for questions 2 and 6 were assigned strength codes of moderate while the remaining questions received strength codes of strong as recorded in Table 16.

Table 16

Responses to Survey Questions 1-7, Principal Support Section, by Specific Groups

Survey Question Theme	Percentage of 3 & 4 Responses		
	<u>Teachers</u> n=56	<u>Mentors</u> n=65	<u>Principals</u> n=19
1. Provides orientation	89.1	79.4	100
2. Makes needed introductions	87.3	77.8	100
3. Observes four or more times	100	96.9	100
4. Provides prompt feedback	98.2	90.4	100
5. Promotes improved instruction	94.5	88.8	100
6. Supports classroom management	83.6	76.2	100
7. Available when needed	90.9	84.1	100

Table 17

Central Tendencies of Survey Items 1-7, Principal Support Section, by Specific Groups

Survey Question Theme	Mean by Group		
	<u>Teachers</u> n=56	<u>Mentors</u> n=65	<u>Principals</u> n=19
1. Provides orientation	3.24	3.02	3.74
2. Makes needed introductions	3.18	2.83	3.53
3. Observes four or more times	3.76	3.44	4.00
4. Provides prompt feedback	3.60	3.35	3.84
5. Promotes improved instruction	3.45	3.17	3.68
6. Supports classroom management	3.13	2.94	3.89
7. Available when needed	3.38	3.13	3.89

Table 18

Overall Strength Codes for Central Tendencies of Survey Items 1-7, Principal Support Section, by Specific Groups

Survey Question Theme	Percentage of 1 & 2 Responses		
	<u>Teachers</u> n=56	<u>Mentors</u> n=65	<u>Principals</u> n=19
1. Provides orientation	Strong	Strong	Strong
2. Makes needed introductions	Strong	Moderate	Strong
3. Observes four or more Times	Strong	Strong	Strong
4. Provides prompt feedback	Strong	Strong	Strong
5. Promotes improved instruction	Strong	Strong	Strong
6. Supports classroom management	Strong	Moderate	Strong
7. Available when needed	Strong	Strong	Strong

Questionnaire

An open ended questionnaire was provided to beginning teachers. Questions centered on the themes established in the survey used for this study. Responses were analyzed and the percentages of positive responses to items were tabulated. The total number of responses to items and the percent of positive responses are recorded in Tables 19, 20, and 21.

Table 19 displays the responses to questionnaire items related to the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program. With comments about the program's preparation for the first year of teaching, 79.20% of responses were coded as positive. One teacher shared that, "The Beginning Teacher Program gave me support at the beginning of the year and throughout each month by presenting topics that covered all the INTASC standards. My mentor helped me daily implement the strategies I learned."

Another stated:

The Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program gave me guidance along the way that was needed to help me feel successful during my first year of teaching. Having others to share ideas with or just bounce off new ideas is a tremendous asset to have as a beginning teacher and this program gave me that opportunity.

Still another teacher commented on the notebook mentioned in focus group interviews stating, "What I remember to be most helpful in the beginning was the checklists provided in the New Teacher Orientation notebook. The information in the notebook was extremely useful! My mentor has been my best resource so far."

Question 2 referred to the induction session assistance in providing an understanding of the North

Carolina Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument (TPAI).

Fifty-nine percent of teachers responded positively to this question. One shared, "The induction sessions provided me with everything I needed to know for my TPAI. Without those sessions, I would have been lost."

Question 3 asked whether or not the beginning teacher's effectiveness was improved through instruction in classroom management techniques provided within the program. Fifty-five percent of responses were coded as positive. One teacher replied that the session was very useful in the beginning orientation, but that the first month's follow-up meeting was even more important. The teacher voiced that having been in the classroom for several weeks, the topic was now more relevant and useful.

Fifty percent of responses related to the impact of teaching techniques provided during the sessions were reported positively. A teacher shared that while the orientation session was useful and helped her feel more prepared, the monthly follow-up session during the school year had more of an impact on her. Another stated, "The sessions helped me tremendously with my lesson plans and teaching techniques."

Thirty-two of 53, or 60.37% of responses were positive in relation to information provided on the North Carolina

Standard Course of Study. Teachers shared that the sessions provided useful information needed for lessons, helped familiarize them with their grade level goals and objectives, and helped them incorporate the standards into lesson plans. One teacher responded, "The North Carolina Standard Course of Study is a very resourceful tool. It prepares every teacher for the upcoming year, so that they can ensure to teach everything that is required for our students."

Table 19

Percent of Positive Responses to Questions from the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire, Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program Section

Themes	Total Responses	Positive Responses	Percent of Positive Responses
1. Preparation for first year	53	42	79.20
2. Understanding of the TPAI instrument	49	29	59.18
3. Instruction in classroom management	54	30	55.55
4. Assistance with teaching techniques	51	26	50.98
5. Assistance with the NCSCS	53	32	60.37

The percentages of positive responses related to mentor support from the questionnaire items are displayed in Table 20. All 53 responses were positive in relation to the support and encouragement provided to new teachers during the first days and weeks of the school year. One teacher said, "She was always available and kept me informed and reminded me of what needed to be done. She helped me reflect on how I was doing." Another shared, "She helped me every step of the way, answering all of my questions and assuring me that my questions were important to her." Still another explained:

She showed me the "teacher" side of the school (boxes, lounge, mail, fax machine, etc.). She introduced me to all administrative staff and teachers I didn't already know. She helped me set up my room and lessons. There really isn't enough room to write all the ways she helped me!

When asked if the mentor provided assistance in developing the Individual Growth Plan (IGP), 90.56% responded positively. A teacher reported that the mentor sat down multiple times to aid in the development of the IGP. She was praised for explaining everything in detail and assisting the teacher with identifying specific goals for the year. Another teacher shared, "She helped by

answering all my questions and by assisting me in formulating my plan. She also made sure that progress was being made throughout the year."

Regular mentor meetings were noted by 88.67% of positive responses to questionnaire item 3. While some teachers reported that they met daily with their mentors, 67% noted that meetings were weekly. Others described the frequency of meetings as regular or bi-weekly. Only 6 teachers reported meetings occurring "as needed" or sporadic.

Questionnaire item 4, relating to mentor support, asked teachers to describe the ways the mentor helped with the establishment of relationships with students, parents, and staff members. Seventy-six percent of responses were deemed as positive. One teacher responded that her mentor introduced her to staff members she didn't know. The mentor also shared her views on relationships with students and parents so she could have a guideline from which to work. Another teacher remarked, "She helped me with names and told me their roles. She also served as a great role model for how to build positive relationships with everyone."

The level of assistance provided to mentors in difficult situations was the theme of question 5. Forty-three out of 51 responses were positive statements.

Receiving a percentage rating of 84.31%, teachers expressed that they felt comfortable approaching their mentor for help with situations. A beginning teacher contributed that the mentor always had solutions, and at first, offered them readily. As the year progressed, the teacher stated that the mentor would lead her to a solution, but let her find it herself. Another expressed that, "My mentor always gave me sound advice and was present to help me see all sides of the problem. She helped me with several difficult situations, and she's helped me be a more even-keeled person."

In addition, a teacher said:

My mentor was very eager to assist in difficulties. I always knew that at any time I could go to my mentor with issues that were occurring. My mentor and I would discuss the difficulties and brainstorm solutions. We would then discuss how to effectively put these solutions into practice.

While nine questionnaires had no response for item 6, 38 out of 44 teachers responded positively to the effect mentoring had on their development of reflective practice with a percentage of 86.36%. Mentors were praised for asking questions that encouraged personal reflection, discussing problems encountered, talking over situations,

and allowing new teachers to articulate fears, concerns, opinions, and ideas. A teacher noted, "My mentor encouraged me to write anything down that I liked or didn't like and anything that worked or didn't work so I will remember it next year."

The final question related to mentoring was the effect of mentoring on the new teacher's use of effective instructional strategies. The percentage of positive responses was determined to be 78.72%. Beginning teachers mentioned that mentors helped them develop lesson plans, shared great ideas on how to present information in fun ways, provided different strategies for instructional use, allowed the teacher to observe him/her teaching, introduced the teacher to a wide variety of practices, and offered guidance throughout the year.

Table 20

*Percent of Positive Responses to Questions from the
Beginning Teacher Questionnaire, Mentor Support Section*

Themes	Total Responses	Positive Responses	Percent of Positive Responses
1. Provision of support and encouragement	53	53	100
2. Understanding of evaluation process	53	48	90.56
3. Regular mentor Meetings	53	47	88.67
4. Support with relationships	51	39	76.47
5. Assistance with problem solving	51	43	84.31
6. Development of reflective practice	44	38	86.36
7. Help with instructional strategies	47	37	78.72

The final section of the questionnaire contained questions related to the support of the principal (See Table 21). Question 1 asked teachers to describe the school orientation provided by the principal or his designee. Positive responses were recorded for 92.59% of the remarks.

Beginning teachers noted that principals introduced them to staff members, provided a tour of the school, informed teachers of rules and policies, and shared other relevant information about their specific schools.

For question 2, teachers were asked to describe the principal's support in regards to classroom management situations. Only 54.71% expressed positive feedback for this area, the lowest percentage noted for the entire questionnaire. Positive comments about principal support for classroom management included statements that the principal was supportive, readily available, helpful, and willing to offer suggestions.

Questionnaire item 3 concerning principal support asked about the feedback provided following observations. Ninety-four percent of comments were found to be positive. Responses included, "She was very good at finding the right balance, not discouraging, but letting you know where you were weak." Another shared, "First he gave me all the great qualities, the things he enjoyed seeing from the lesson. If there were things that needed to be improved, he offered ways to improve." In addition, another teacher stated, "All four of my observations were followed by face-to-face meetings to discuss the lessons and all standards. They gave positive support and useful suggestions for

improvement.”

In questionnaire item 4 regarding principal support, teachers were asked to describe how the principal encouraged them to participate in staff development activities aimed at improving classroom instruction and delivery. Sixty-five percent of responses were determined to be positive. Teachers shared that principals had provided school-based staff development opportunities, suggested conferences to attend, informed them of available workshops, mandated workshops, and allowed them to attend any workshops to which they asked to attend. A teacher expressed, “All of our principals stress teachers continuing to learn, and I have been able to participate in several workshops because of their support.” Another shared, “I was encouraged to participate in any staff development that was available. I was invited to go to the North Carolina Reading Conference.”

Table 21

*Percent of Positive Responses to Questions from the
Beginning Teacher Questionnaire, Principal Support Section*

Themes	Total Responses	Positive Responses	Percent of Positive Responses
1. School orientation	54	45	92.49
2. Classroom management			
Support	53	29	54.71
3. Supportive feedback	54	51	94.44
4. Support for staff			
development activities	49	32	65.30

In addition to the questionnaire items noted in Tables 19, 20, and 21, several additional questions were included in each section of the questionnaire. Question six from the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program section asked teachers to share the components from the program that were found to be the most helpful. Fifty-one responses were provided, with some of these listing several components. Table 22 displays both the frequencies of responses and overall strength codes for frequencies following established study determinations.

Table 22

Frequency of Themes and Overall Strength Codes from Questionnaire Question 6 on the Most Helpful Components of the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program

Themes	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Strength Code</u>
Providing school information	1	Weak
Support with relationships	8	Strong
Support from mentor	25	Strong
Program sessions/components	27	Strong

Question 7 from the questionnaire requested information from teachers on how the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program could be modified or changed to improve the effectiveness of the program. While 54 teachers returned questionnaires, 8 left this item blank. The remaining responses were grouped according to similarity of theme, tallied, and assigned strength codes using established guidelines. Information from question 7 is displayed in Table 23.

Table 23

Frequency of Themes and Overall Strength Codes from Questionnaire Question 7 on Suggested Changes to the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program

Themes	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Strength Code</u>
No changes	10	Strong
Reduce length of program and program sessions	9	Strong
Increase program sessions	1	Weak
Assign mentors in same grade/subject area	9	Strong
Increase sessions at school sites	2	Weak
Provide variety of sessions for specific teacher groups	12	Strong
Less paperwork	1	Weak

Teachers were asked in question 8 concerning mentor support for input into how the teacher and mentor relationship could be improved. Forty-one teachers responded to the question. Twenty teachers, or 48.78% of responses, responded that the mentor relationship was positive and offered no suggestions. Ten teachers, or 24.39%, suggested that the mentor assigned should teach on the same grade level or subject area as the beginning

teacher. Eleven responses (26.82%) made varied suggestions that have been grouped together as "other."

Questionnaire item 5 from the section related to principal support asked in what ways the beginning teacher and principal relationships could be strengthened and improved. Responses were grouped according to frequencies of themes and have been reported using strength codes in Table 24.

Table 24

Frequency of Themes and Overall Strength Codes from Questionnaire Question 5 on Improvement in Principal Support

Themes	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Strength Code</u>
No concerns	36	Strong
Additional support and encouragement	14	Strong
More involvement in the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program	4	Moderate

Questionnaires that were distributed to initially-licensed teachers during the 2007-2008 school year included an additional question. The question read: Will you be returning to teach in this school system for the 2008-2009 school year? Twenty-four returned surveys included this

question. Twenty-two surveys indicated that they would be returning for a percentage of 91.66. One teacher reported that her family was moving out of the area while another was going to pursue further studies.

The final research question was: What is the impact of the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program on teacher retention? In order to determine the actual retention rate of beginning teachers in the county, the Program Facilitator provided information regarding the number of beginning teachers hired each year and the number of teachers not returning for various reasons. The school system data for the 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008 years has been recorded in Table 25. Results indicate that the trend for the retention rate of beginning teachers has been a steady increase over the past 3 school years. The most current data indicate that the retention rate for the beginning teachers in the school system is 91.5%.

Table 25

Beginning Teacher Retention Rates for 2005-2008

School Year	Beginning Teachers	Teachers Not Returning	Retention Rate
2005-2006	88	14	84.1
2006-2007	77	8	89.7
2007-2008	70	6	91.5

Summary

This program evaluation was conducted to determine the effectiveness of a beginning teacher induction program. The study employed Stufflebeam's CIPP model (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004) to examine the processes used in preparing, assisting, and retaining new teachers. Results of the investigation can be used to enhance and improve beginning teacher induction programs across the country.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction of Dissertation

As previously established, according to the NCTAF (2002), the perceived teacher shortage is not due to a lack of prepared educators but is caused by a high teacher turnover rate. In an effort to remedy this problem, school systems across the nation have implemented new teacher induction programs to assist beginning educators (Curran & Goldrick, 2002; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Jofus & Maddox-Dolan, 2002). Providing support for new teachers can help them with the day-to-day needs of their jobs as well as assist them in obtaining the skills needed for effective classroom instruction (Barnett et al., 2002).

The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation of a Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program currently used in a school system located in rural western North Carolina to determine its effect on teacher retention. This program intentionally strives to address the multiple needs of beginning teachers through on-going training sessions, support through the use of a trained mentor, and additional assistance provided by school administrators.

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What are the current conditions that necessitate the implementation of this program?
2. What is the school system doing in its Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program to provide new teachers with support and assistance?
3. Are established processes (such as mentor meetings, staff development sessions, administrator support) being followed to support beginning teachers?
4. What is the impact of the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program on teacher retention?

Data collected in this study were obtained through a variety of sources, including the following: (a) personal interviews with the Director of Personnel in the school system; (b) personal interviews with the Program Facilitator; (c) focus group interviews with beginning teachers from two elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools; (d) surveys distributed to all beginning teachers from the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years, mentors of these beginning teachers, and school principals from all county schools; (e) open-ended questionnaires distributed to all beginning teachers from the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years; and (f) analysis of information provided by the Director of Personnel on North Carolina state guidelines for mentoring.

Implications of Findings

Data sources were subject to triangulation in order to increase the reliability of findings. According to Ary et al. (2002), the combination of methods using qualitative research results in stronger evidence of credibility.

Interviews with the Director of Personnel and the Program Facilitator as well as a review of documents provided on state requirements showed consistency in multiple areas. All three data sources strongly indicated that state guidelines demand the implementation of a beginning teacher induction program in the state of North Carolina. While program components are left to the discretion of the Local Education Agency, the minimum length of the program was established by the state. County specific sessions were noted by both the Program Facilitator and Director of Personnel as being designed to assist teachers as they transition into their teaching careers. During both interviews, mentors were noted as assisting during the transition period, providing valuable guidance and support for the beginning educator.

All three sources additionally referenced the program's expectations in providing beginning teachers with what would be expected of them during these first critical years of service. The Director of Personnel specifically

noted the development of the Individual Growth Plan, the required observations, and areas directly related to the classroom. The Program Facilitator provided details about program components that explained the Individual Growth Plan and the evaluation process, required on-going staff development sessions, and provided information concerning classroom instruction, management of student behavior, and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. Document review included similar information.

Both the Program Facilitator and Director of Personnel strongly indicated the high teacher turnover rate as a reason for the implementation of a beginning teacher program. While not specifically noted in the documents provided for review, the fact that such a state program exists can be deemed as consistent with the need to retain beginning teachers.

Such findings are significant in identifying practices that support beginning teachers and are consistently supported in the literature as noted by Colgan (2002). School districts have implemented similar programs in an effort to reduce the attrition rate of beginning teachers. Additionally, Curran and Goldrick (2002) reported that induction programs for new teachers effectively reduce the attrition rates of new teachers as well as positively

impact the students they teach.

The research question "What are the contextual conditions that require this program?" has clearly been answered by the triangulation of the data gathered from the interviews and document review:

1. The state of North Carolina mandates such a program and has set up particular parameters and guidelines that are adhered to in the program which was evaluated.
2. The program is designed to assist with the retention rate of beginning teachers.
3. Program components focus on assisting teachers as they transition into their first year of teaching.
4. Program sessions provide information about what is expected of a beginning teacher.

Data provided through focus group interviews with beginning teachers, the survey administered to beginning teachers, mentors, and principals, and the open ended questionnaire provided to beginning teachers was also subjected to triangulation in order to determine the answer to the research questions "What is the school system doing within and outside the program to build support and assistance to beginning teachers?" and "What are the established processes of the program and are they being

followed?"

Data from focus group interviews at all three school levels (elementary, middle, and high) show that the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program components aimed at preparation for teaching were of importance to all groups. Five out of six groups found assistance with teaching techniques and help with management skills to be areas of strength. Four groups indicated strong support with relationships. Five of six groups received strength codes of moderate to high in the area of assistance in the understanding of the evaluation process. Strength codes of moderate to high in these noted areas indicate that beginning teachers found the program to be effective in meeting designated needs.

Survey response data indicate that questions 1 through 12 related to the program components, sessions, and activities from the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program also received strength codes from moderate to strong for all 12 questions related to the program. Such responses support the results from the focus group interviews related to the program components. The only specific component noted by beginning teachers as strong was item 9 which related to the use of cooperative activities with other teachers during program sessions. Strength codes assigned

to questions answered by mentors and principals were slightly higher than those of teachers as noted in Table 10. It should be noted that mentors and principals were not active participants in the program sessions; beginning teachers were the only group which actually took part in program components.

As shown in Table 17, the percent of positive responses to questionnaire items related to program components ranged from 50.98% to 79.20%. The highest percentage of positive responses was question 1 with its focus on the extent that the program prepared teachers for the first year of teaching. Assistance with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study received 60.37% positive responses from teachers. The lowest percent of positive responses was the question referring to the assistance with teaching techniques provided to the beginning teacher.

Data triangulated from the interviews, survey, and questionnaire indicate that the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program components are effectively supporting teachers in a variety of ways during those important first years of teaching. Research indicates that such findings are significant due to the consistency in the literature related to teacher induction programs. Joftus and Maddox-Dolan (2002) examined the Texas Beginning Educator Support

System (TxBESS) which was designed to increase teacher retention and assist new teachers as they develop effective teaching strategies. The implementation of this program increased the retention rate of beginning teachers from 80% to 88% following its first year of implementation (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan).

Triangulation was again used to determine the effectiveness of the use of a mentor for beginning teachers. Mentor support, as a part of the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program, was examined through interviews, the survey, and the questionnaire. Focus group interviews with beginning teachers indicated that the use of the mentor was a strong theme in all six settings.

Survey responses to questions 1 through 12 related to mentor support showed that responses from beginning teachers received strong strength codes in 11 out of 12 areas. The remaining area, help with relationships, received a strength code of moderate. Responses from mentors and principals were strong on all 12 survey questions. Percentages of one and two responses for mentor support on the survey items as recorded by mentors were higher than those from teachers and principals. Responses by beginning teachers to questionnaire items related to mentor support provided additional positive data in this

area. Beginning teachers indicated percentages of positive responses for mentor support ranging from 76.47% to 100% on the seven questions. Data from the interviews, survey, and questionnaire indicate that the use of a supportive mentor is significant in the overall effectiveness of the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program.

Mentor support has been noted by educational research as an effective means of providing help and assistance to beginning teachers. Joftus and Maddox-Dolan (2002) provided evidence that mentors used as coaches have been used to assist in the retention of teachers in Texas. Along with the school administrator, the mentor meets frequently with the beginning teacher, performs formal and informal observations, and provides support as needed (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan). Additionally, Brock and Grady (1998) found that beginning teachers believed that mentors were the most vital part of the induction programs. In a further study, Andrews and Quinn (2005) noted that first year teachers with mentors had significantly higher perceptions of support than those without mentors. Such research supports the finding of this study that mentor support is viewed by beginning teachers as a strong feature of the total program.

Data on the principal support received by beginning

teachers as a part of the total program was additionally subjected to triangulation to determine the effectiveness of this component. Focus group interviews with beginning teachers showed data indicating strong support by the school principals in all six locations.

Survey questions designed to provide data on principal support showed that beginning teacher responses received strength codes of strong for all seven related items. Likewise, principals scored themselves high in all areas, receiving strength codes of strong throughout. Mentor perceptions of administrator support were slightly lower with strength codes of moderate, particularly in the areas of making needed introductions and supporting the classroom management needs of the beginning teacher. Principals scored themselves with positive responses to survey items 100% of the time with self-perceptions higher than those of teachers and mentors.

Principal support has been noted in the research to be important as related to beginning teacher needs. Wood (2005) found that school administrators were vital to an effective induction program. Principals were noted by teachers for support in day-to-day relationships, for the modeling of professional behaviors, and for support in the defining of roles and expectations (Wood). Triangulated

data from this study support these findings and are significant in identifying principal support for beginning teachers as important in the retention of beginning educators.

Questionnaire items related to principal support ranged from 54.71% to 92.49% with the lowest percentage of positive responses being that of providing support with classroom management.

While principal support was shown by data to be strong, support with classroom management consistently received less favorable responses from beginning teachers as noted by the triangulation of the data.

An analysis of the data related to the total program indicates that:

1. The Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program components are effectively providing support to beginning educators in this school system.
2. The support of mentors is a vital part of the total program with triangulation of data showing that beginning teachers recognize and appreciate the efforts of mentors to provide assistance as teachers begin their careers in education.
3. Principal support was shown to be important to beginning teachers as well as evidenced by the

triangulation of data. One area, support with classroom management, was determined to be an area in which improvement was suggested.

4. Processes established by the Program Facilitator and mandated by the state of North Carolina are being followed by the county in which this study took place.

The final research question sought to determine whether or not more teachers were being retained as a result of participation in the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program. Table 25 shows that there has been a steady increase over 3 school years in the percentage of teachers retained in this school system. Currently, 91.5% of beginning teachers are returning to the system which was studied following their first year as educators. This information is also supported by the responses provided from the additional question on the questionnaire given to first-year teachers. As noted previously, 91.66% of teachers who returned the questionnaire responded that they would be returning to work in the school system during the 2008-2009 school year. While the researcher acknowledges that factors other than those evident as part of the program may impact the retention rate, the positive results shown by all data are conclusive that the program is

effectively aiding in the retention of beginning teachers.

Limitations

Several limitations may have affected this study. The researcher served as the facilitator of the focus group interviews. Since the researcher was an employee of the school system, although not a part of the program, responses of some participants may have been inhibited during focus group interviews. This could be considered a threat to the internal validity of the study. Anonymity could not be provided in an interview setting. Participants were also with co-workers and responses could have been affected by the inclusion of peers during the interview process.

While invitations for participation in focus group interviews were sent to all eligible teachers and attendance was not required, one participant informed the researcher that teachers were told by their principal that they must attend. Notably, the interview in question had a negative tone throughout the session which could be attributed to individuals who felt forced to participate.

In addition, the research was conducted at the end of the school year. While the intent of the researcher was to include information about the program for the entire year

of participation, the time of year was very hectic for all participants and may have affected the climate of some responses.

Another limitation of the study was that mentors and principals completed the survey related to the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program, yet were not active participants in many of the actual program sessions. Their responses can be viewed as their perceptions of those parts of the program. In many cases, as noted Chapter 4, their responses were aligned to those of the teachers. At times, however, their responses received higher levels of agreement than the actual program participants.

Limiting the study was also the fact that the focus group interviews consisted of varying numbers of participants. Since all eligible teachers from the six targeted schools were invited and participation was voluntary, the numbers in the actual groups fluctuated from site to site. Interviews lasted until participants ceased discussion of the program. Session length varied from approximately 15 to 45 minutes at different school locations. Frequencies of themes, likewise, were affected by the depth of discussion.

While the establishment of strength codes for theme frequencies during the interview process could be viewed as

a delimitating factor, such a designation has been determined to be a limitation instead. The frequency designations were set too low; therefore, most themes have been assigned a strength code of strong. If further studies choose similar boundaries, strength code frequencies should be increased across all designations.

Delimitations

Several restrictions were imposed on this study in order to narrow its scope. Data for the study was collected from only the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 beginning teachers. The pilot test for instruments was conducted using teachers from 2005-2006. This decision was determined by the researcher due to the fact that prior to these years, the school system had been three separate systems with varying programs for beginning teachers.

The participants for the study were located in the same school system in order to evaluate the specific program. Participants are, however, representative of beginning teachers across the United States. The study findings can, therefore, be generalized for further similar studies and situations with beginning teachers, particularly in the areas of mentor and principal support.

The sample population for beginning teachers, mentors, and principals was all eligible participants in the system

with the survey and open-ended questionnaire provided for the entire group. No random samples were used for the study. The researcher's intent for this decision was to gather as much data as possible from as many participants willing to share their input.

Anonymity was provided for survey and questionnaire participants. Return envelopes were provided to participants and were coded only with a letter identifying the group to which the individual was a member.

Recommendations

Several recommendations for program management and further research have surfaced as a result of this program evaluation. First, the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program should be continued with its current practices and procedures. No obvious needs for change were noted through the triangulation of data. Several considerations are noted in items 3, 4, and 5 that emerged from questionnaire items, but were not evidenced through triangulation.

The Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program should also consider including additional sessions aimed at assisting beginning teachers with classroom management. Only 55.55% of teachers responded positively that the induction program assisted in providing instruction in classroom management skills. In addition, one focus group at the elementary

level did not have any mention of assistance with management skills.

The Program Facilitator should consider additional staff development opportunities for administrators aimed at providing support for beginning teachers in the area of support with classroom management. Fifty-five percent of teachers responded positively to questions related to administrator support for teachers in this area on the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire, considerably lower than any other question.

Additional opportunities for cooperative activities with other teachers should be provided during program sessions. When asked about suggested changes to the existing program, teachers indicated the need for a variety of sessions for specific teacher groups.

The Program Facilitator, aided by school administrators, should provide yearly opportunities for input by teachers about the program and its components, possibly through the use of the survey and questionnaire used in the study. Program facilitators should allow responses to be anonymous in order that input can be honest and direct.

Additional research should be conducted on the use of induction programs as a means for increasing the level of

new teacher retention rates. It would benefit the studied school system as well as schools across the nation to study the effects of mentoring with an individual mentor assigned to each new teacher as opposed to the assignment of one mentor to several beginning teachers. It would also be beneficial to investigate the effectiveness of mentor assignment with teachers in the same content area or grade level as opposed to random assignment.

Summary

The retention of teachers has become a concern for many in the field of education in recent years. As a means of providing support for beginning teachers during their initial years of experience many school systems have implemented induction programs. This program evaluation of a Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program examined the practices, procedures, and support provided for newly hired teachers. Results gathered from the investigation can be used to improve the studied program as well as those across the country. Implementation of effective practices can diminish the problem of high teacher turnover.

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Appendix A

Beginning Teacher, Mentor, and Administrator Survey

Beginning Teacher, Mentor, and Administrator Survey

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Beginning Teacher Induction Program

1. Induction sessions assist in easing the transition into teaching.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree | |

2. Induction sessions provide information about the Board of Education, the superintendent, and other school leaders at the district level that contribute to the understanding of specific roles and responsibilities.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree | |

3. Induction sessions provide information about state and local benefits and salaries.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree | |

4. Induction sessions provide information regarding the expectations of the North Carolina Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument (TPAI-R).

Strongly Agree Disagree
 Agree Strongly Disagree
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

5. Induction sessions provide information regarding state policies regarding the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators.

Strongly Agree Disagree
 Agree Strongly Disagree
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

6. Teacher effectiveness is strengthened through training in effective classroom management techniques.

Strongly Agree Disagree
 Agree Strongly Disagree
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

7. Effectiveness for beginning teachers is enhanced through training in teaching techniques.

Strongly Agree Disagree
 Agree Strongly Disagree
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

8. The effectiveness of beginning teachers is improved through detailed sharing of the district's mission, procedures, policies and goals.

Strongly Agree Disagree

Strongly Agree Disagree
 Agree Strongly Disagree
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

Mentor Support

1. Mentors provide support through regularly scheduled meetings.

Strongly Agree Disagree
 Agree Strongly Disagree
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

2. Mentors provide encouragement during the first weeks of school.

Strongly Agree Disagree
 Agree Strongly Disagree
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

3. Mentors introduce beginning teachers to key personnel at the school.

Strongly Agree Disagree
 Agree Strongly Disagree
 Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Mentors provide assistance in the development of the Individual Growth Plan.

Strongly Agree Disagree
 Agree Strongly Disagree

___ Neither Agree nor Disagree

9. Mentoring activities such as informal conferences, observations, learning opportunities at school, and other activities such as the promotion of reflective practices help the beginning teacher to develop as an educator.

___ Strongly Agree

___ Disagree

___ Agree

___ Strongly Disagree

___ Neither Agree nor Disagree

10. The mentoring relationship helps the beginning teacher develop interpersonal and relationship skills.

___ Strongly Agree

___ Disagree

___ Agree

___ Strongly Disagree

___ Neither Agree nor Disagree

11. The mentoring relationship helps the beginning teacher set goals for continued professional growth.

___ Strongly Agree

___ Disagree

___ Agree

___ Strongly Disagree

___ Neither Agree nor Disagree

12. The mentoring relationship assists the beginning teacher in improving the use of effective instructional strategies.

___ Strongly Agree

___ Disagree

Agree Strongly Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Principal Support

1. The principal provides a school orientation session prior to the start of school.

Strongly Agree Disagree

Agree Strongly Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

2. The principal provides introductions to staff members that are key to operations at the school level.

Strongly Agree Disagree

Agree Strongly Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

3. The principal, and/or his/her designee, observes instruction a minimum of four times throughout the course of the school year.

Strongly Agree Disagree

Agree Strongly Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. The principal provides prompt feedback following observations that encouraged and challenged the beginning teacher to improve classroom instruction and delivery.

Appendix B

Beginning Teacher Questionnaire

Beginning Teacher Questionnaire

Please respond to the following questions.

Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program

1. In what ways did the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program prepare you for the first year of experience as a teacher?
2. How well did induction sessions assist you in understanding the North Carolina Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument (TPAI)?
3. Explain whether or not your effectiveness as an educator was improved through instruction in effective classroom management techniques?
4. Describe the impact on teaching techniques from sessions provided during the Beginning Teacher and Mentor Program.
5. How did information provided about the North Carolina Standard Course of Study assist you as a beginning teacher?
6. What program components did you find most helpful?
7. What program components could be changed or modified to improve the effectiveness of the program?

Mentor Support

1. In what ways did your mentor provide support and encouragement during the first days and weeks of

school?

2. Describe the assistance received from your mentor in the development of the Individual Growth Plan.
3. Describe the regularity of meetings with your mentor during your first year of teaching.
4. Describe the ways your mentor helped you to establish relationships with other staff members, students, and parents.
5. When faced with a difficult situation at school, describe the level of assistance received from your mentor in identifying solutions to your problems.
6. Describe the effect of the mentoring relationship on your development of reflective practice.
7. Describe the effect of the mentoring relationship on your use of effective instructional strategies.
8. How could the beginning teacher/mentor relationship be improved?

Principal Support

1. Describe the school orientation session provided by the principal/his or her designee.
2. Describe the relationship of your principal in regards to classroom management situations.
3. What kind of feedback following observations did the principal provide?

4. Describe how your principal encouraged you to participate in staff development activities aimed at improving classroom instruction and delivery.
5. In what ways could the beginning teacher/principal relationship be strengthened and improved?