

MENTORS' AND MENTEES' PERCEPTIONS OF A SYSTEM-WIDE MANDATED
MENTORING PROGRAM FOR FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS

by

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction
in the Graduate School of
The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2009

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the United States school systems are aware of the teacher shortage. The projected need to fill 2.2 million positions by 2010 will increase throughout the educational field, especially in areas of high poverty schools and particular content areas. Therefore, it is crucial to provide the best type of mentoring program to retain the best and brightest teachers in the educational field.

The purpose of this mixed method study was to examine the perceptions of first-year teachers and their mentors regarding their school system's mentoring program. Furthermore, this study examined the perceived effects of the program.

The results of the study indicated that the mentoring program appeared to be nurturing as perceived by the first-year teachers. Their mentors perceived the program to be beneficial.

The recommendations for future studies suggested that mentoring programs should try to match mentees and mentors as much as possible, carefully train and caution mentors with regard to establishing appropriate professional relationships with mentees and do professional development with mentees as well as mentors before the program begins.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The earning of my doctoral degree has been a long journey and I am thankful to those that guided me through it. I am most indebted to my doctoral chair, Dr. C.J. Daane. You have been an inspiration in this journey and in my life. You exemplify the term mentor and I am a better person because of you. I would like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Craig Shwery, Dr. Daisy Arredondo Rucinski, Dr. Lee Freeman, and Dr. Phillip Westbrook, for your dedication of time and expertise. I would also like to thank Sherri Edwards for all of your assistance. I would like to thank my friend Kim for the advice and endless support. Finally, a considerable thank you goes to my family for picking up the slack in my life and supporting me to the very end of this journey.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The first year of teaching can be very challenging for many novice teachers (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Facing these challenges successfully promotes the certainty and dedication necessary for life-long professional development (Boe, Cook, & Shin, 2007; Harrison, Lawson, & Wortley, 2005). Beginning teachers' first year determines if they will continue to work in the profession and how effective they may be. Most educators concur that the experiences, both positive and negative, of the first year can have a profound influence on the rest of one's educational career (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002).

It is estimated that between 25% and 50% of all new teachers leave the profession within 5 years of teaching (Fleener, 2001; Voke, 2002). Furthermore, most of those who leave do so within the first 2 years of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Figuratively speaking, the field of education has been known as the "profession that eats its young" (Halford, 1998, p. 33).

When new teachers continuously leave the field of education, it creates instability in a school system, inevitably affecting students' achievement and safety. Instability also increases the cost of hiring and providing professional development for new teachers (Johnson, 2004). Halford (1998) stated that teacher turnover threatens school reform, which requires years of sustained efforts among personnel. The higher the attrition rate of beginning teachers, the more difficult it is to achieve school improvement.

The retention of many beginning teachers will depend on their ability to overcome the problems they encounter during their first year (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). While these problems vary based on specific circumstances related to each individual teacher, numerous studies have indicated that classroom management is the problem that occurs most frequently (Silvestri, 2001). Difficulty with classroom management can cause feelings of anxiety and uncertainty for a number of first-year teachers. Many times, they are not properly introduced to effective techniques during their pre-service training programs (Ross, 2002).

The lack of pre-service training has led numerous novice teachers to enter into their career as incomplete professionals. Some veteran teachers assume that beginning teachers should arrive from their pre-service program ready to go without any help (Wolfe & Smith, 1996). However, new teachers are concerned about possessing the competence and confidence that they perceive other veteran teachers have, and they quickly reach a position where they are in fear of asking for help. Unfortunately, the fear of not performing at expectation levels often leads them to leave the profession (Wolfe & Smith, 1996). In Darling-Hammond's (2003) research, she found that one of the main reasons that new teachers leave the profession was lack of mentoring support.

Although the idea to assist new teachers has been a major challenge to the profession, it was not until the mid-1980s that states began formal mentoring programs. Mentoring programs have never been more widespread than today. These programs exist in 47 states and are mandated in 34 states (Brown, 2003). Recommendations by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (2006), in response to the defined challenges for beginning teachers, state that mentoring programs are important in all school systems. The purpose of those various mentoring programs is the retention of beginning teachers (Wong, 2004). In addition, mentoring

programs need to assure guidance to the novice teachers' first year of teaching so that first year is a positive and productive experience as well as one which establishes the foundation for a satisfying professional career (Reid & Slinger, 2006). The primary goal for a mentoring program should be to assist new teachers in analyzing and monitoring their own teaching skills and effectiveness (Youngs, 2003). This could help a first-year teacher to be successful and confident from the beginning of the school year (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Mentoring is designed to help first-year teachers in making a transition from a novice teacher to an expert professional.

Studies by Feiman-Nemser (2001) and Gratch (2001) stated that with a competent mentor, mentoring support programs could possibly provide support to new teachers by exposing them to successful instructional strategies. The mentor-mentee relationship allows the novice teacher to observe, question, emulate, and adapt instructional methodologies. Through classroom observations, a novice teacher can identify the effective classroom management plan for the mentor teacher. The mentor can be a non-evaluating observer giving constructive feedback and suggestions for classroom management. Finally, the mentoring relationship should allow the development of positive professional relationships among colleagues, instilling in the new teacher a sense of belonging within the professional learning community. This encourages the creation of an environment in which the attrition rates of first-year teachers should decline (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Lindgren, 2005).

However, Feiman-Nemser, Carver, Schwille, and Yusko (1999a) indicated that some mentoring programs lack the structure and available funding to support effective mentoring programs. Even with more structured programs, sometimes these programs can lead to the perpetuation of traditional instructional practices that neither promote the abstract learning of the students nor high quality teaching by the novice teacher (Carter & Francis, 2001). For novice

teachers to become high-quality teachers, it is imperative that mentoring programs be effective. They must value and support practices designed to ensure success for all beginning teachers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

A mentoring program can be unsuccessful if it does not ensure equal quality for all first-year teachers. This is particularly true if certain guidelines are not followed. Mentors need to train, not evaluate, first-year teachers. The ever-changing approaches to teaching must be reflected in effective mentorship programs. Reflective training requires a commitment on the part of the local school and school system of time, resources, and funding (Britton, Wong, & Ganser, 2003).

One local school system in Alabama mandated that first-year teachers participate in a new mentoring program called the Alabama Teacher Mentoring Program. As part of the success of the program, the following was recommended: (a) all first-year teachers were to be assigned a mentor and the mentor must have had experience as a classroom teacher; (b) all mentors were to be regarded as effective in their area of instruction; (c) the school administrator was to match the teaching area or level of the mentee with the mentor; (d) the school system needed to provide ongoing support for first-year teachers; and (e) the school system and school administrators needed to provide a supportive culture of trust, mutual respect, and collegiality. Ultimately, the school system, school administrators, and mentors were to encourage ongoing professional development through collaborative efforts (Alabama Department of Education, 2007).

Local school districts cannot afford to be content about teachers leaving the profession. It is estimated that the average cost of recruiting, hiring, preparing, and then losing a teacher is about \$50,000 (Carroll & Fulton, 2004). Mentoring programs could be a possible solution that provides the mainstay for these novice teachers (Reid & Slinger, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

When new teachers continuously resign and leave the field of education, it creates instability in a school system. Instability also increases the cost of recruitment and professional development for a school system (Johnson, 2004). Therefore, it is critical to find ways to retain the newly hired teachers. One way to support new teachers is through a district mentoring program. Currently, there is a lack of research on mandated mentoring programs. A mandated program puts the mentor in the position of influence that may positively or negatively affect the performance of a novice teacher participating in the mentoring program. For a mentoring program to be effective, it must be supporting and provide positive mentor/mentee collaboration. Therefore, the evaluation of mandated mentoring programs involving mentors and mentees is needed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of first-year teachers and their mentors regarding their school system's mandated mentoring program. Furthermore, this study examined the perceived effects of the program. The school system in this study has not completed any formal research on the program. Therefore, this study can inform the school system as to the perceptions of the teachers and their mentors about the mentoring program. Also, the information from this study could help increase knowledge of policies concerning the mentoring of first-year teachers.

Significance of the Study

Throughout the United States, school systems are aware of the teacher shortage. The projected need to fill 2.2 million positions by 2010 will increase throughout the educational field, especially in areas of high poverty schools and particular content areas (Ingersoll & Smith,

2003). Hence, supporting and providing the best type of mentoring program is crucial to retaining the best and brightest teachers in the educational field.

The research that was conducted for this study is significant if mentoring programs are developed to support and provide the best type of mentoring. Then school systems may be able to retain effective teachers and improve mentor/mentee collaboration.

This study may provide local school systems insights of the perceptions of the mentors and mentees regarding their mandated mentoring programs. By examining the needs of the program, mentor teachers can better understand their role and school systems can accept the responsibility of supporting their newly hired employees.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the perceptions of first-year teachers regarding their school system's mandated mentoring program?
2. What are the perceptions of first-year teacher mentors regarding their school system's mandated mentoring program?
3. What are the perceived effects of the school system's mandated mentoring program?

Definition of Terms

To provide for a better understanding of this study, the following terms are defined. Some definitions are the researcher's and are not accompanied by a citation.

First-year teacher: A certified teacher who is within his/her first year of teaching.

Novice teacher: A teacher that has been teaching in classroom for less than 3 years.

Mentor: An experienced teacher who is presumed to have exceptional teaching ability and is able to relate to teachers new to the field by assisting them on their teaching practices and knowledge of the educational profession.

Mentoring: A comprehensive effort by the mentor teacher directed as a sustained effort to guide and assist the novice teacher in developing better teaching practices, curriculum, instructional techniques, and enhancement of reflection (Woosley & Tiarks, 2003).

Professional Education Personnel Evaluation Program (PEPE): A comprehensive evaluation plan for certified school staff of Alabama. The program concentrates on competencies which effective educators are known to possess, on performance standards, on results, and on validation of both achievements and teaching behaviors preventing success. Its primary goal is the improvement of teaching and learning; and such, it seeks to effect growth, collegiality and assistance as opposed to dismissal or demotion. Unlike some assessment measures, PEPE (which includes teachers and specialty area educators) is predicted on the belief that because the teaching-learning process is extremely complex, multiple data sources and data collection tools are necessary to obtain an accurate appraisal of professional practices and needs (Alabama State Department of Education, 2002).

Limitations of the Study

1. The size of the population was small (nine first-year teachers and nine mentor teachers).
2. The study was limited to elementary mentors and mentees.
3. Participation in the study was voluntary; therefore, those who chose to participate might be viewed as a biased sample.

4. No reliability or validity has been established by the Alabama State Department of Education for their survey which was used in this study.

5. The researcher was employed in the school district where the study was conducted.

Assumptions of the Study

The study accepted the following assumptions:

1. The respondents were honest and truthful in their comments and were not intimidated or greatly influenced by group dynamics.

2. It was assumed that all respondents understood each question to the fullest extent.

3. It was assumed that all items on the survey instrument were clear, understandable, and sensitive to social and cultural values.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 presented the introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, definitions of terms, limitations, and assumptions of the study. Chapter 2 will contain a comprehensive review of related literature to various aspects of mentoring as it relates to novice teachers and mandated mentoring programs. The methodology and procedures used to gather data for this study will be presented in chapter 3. Results of analysis and findings that have emerged from the study will be contained in chapter 4. Chapter 5 will contain findings and results, conclusions drawn from the findings, implications, and recommendations for practice and further study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of first-year teachers and their mentors regarding their school system's mandated mentoring program. This study also examined the perceived effects of the program.

The review of literature pertaining to this study includes (a) first-year teachers, (b) mentoring first-year teachers, (c) mentoring programs, and (d) moving from novice to expert teacher.

First-year Teachers

Studies have shown that those who go into the profession must be encouraged to stay in the educational field (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Algozzine, Cowan-Hatchcock, Gretes, & Queen, 2007). For first-year teachers to stay in the field of education, attention must be given in the areas of rewards, professional growth, background, and enculturation (Berry & Hirsch, 2005). By identifying areas of dissatisfaction among beginning teachers and finding ways to retain them, it may be possible to lessen some of the problems of first-year teachers (Reid & Slinger, 2006).

The first year of teaching is a difficult challenge. First-year teachers come from all ages and experiences (Quinn & Andrews, 2004). Some are right out of college while others are starting a second career. After years of being the student in the classroom, the beginning educator is now teaching his/her classroom of students (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Although the

first-year teacher is responsible for his/her classroom of students, he/she is still a novice in the area of teaching. However, first-year teachers often have been treated as if they were experienced teachers. They have faced the pressures of being assigned the same number of classes, duty periods, extracurricular responsibilities, and, often, given the most difficult discipline issues (Bjarnadottir, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001; Quinn & Andrews, 2004).

Today, there continues to be a concern with the amount of pressure that new teachers face (Pryadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003). These teachers deal with a variety of problems simultaneously. One problem gives rise to another, creating a complex network of challenges. An escalating effect occurs when one problem compounds the seriousness of another (Ingersoll, 2003). At the same time, these first-year teachers are placed under the stressful lens of the microscope of many stakeholders including administrators, parents, community members, and other teachers in the profession. These experiences can promote feelings of frustration, embarrassment, and isolation. Inevitably, feelings of loneliness and frustration can cause many problems for first-year teachers (Halford, 1998).

Some of the most frequently cited problems of first-year teachers include (a) classroom management (Anguiano, 2001; Brock & Grady, 1998; Hertzog, 2002; Palumbo & Sanacore, 2007; Sprague & Pennell, 2000; Veeman, 1984; Watzke, 2003; Wolfe & Smith, 1996), (b) diversity issues (Brock & Grady, 1998; Ganser, 1999; Jones & Jones, 2004; Peterson, Cross, & Johnson, 2000; Veeman, 1984; Whitaker, 2000), (c) parental involvement (Ganser, 1999; Gee, 2001; Richardson, 2008; Veeman, 1984), and (d) planning (Ganser, 1999; Reig, Paquette, & Chen, 2007; Schmidt, 2005; Veeman, 1984; Whitaker, Markowitz, & Latter, 2000).

Classroom Management

Classroom management problems have long been identified as the most problematic issue teachers face in their first years of teaching. It is the greatest threat to a long and successful teaching career. Teachers report classroom management to be their primary source of career-based stress, and former teachers report it to be the number one reason they left the profession (Ayers, 2001; Gee, 2001; Silvesti, 2001; Wolery, Werts, Caldwell, Snyder, & Lisowski, 1995).

The Education Foundation conducted a study called the Boston Plan for Excellence. The researchers found the most commonly expressed frustrations of first-year teachers were classroom management and discipline issues. The teachers interviewed also revealed they had lowered their expectations for how long they would stay in the field of education (Rose & Gallup, 2002).

Classroom management situations arising from lack of student motivation, talking back to teachers, and teachers' classroom organization can present challenges to many beginning teachers. Classroom management is difficult for most new teachers and has been ranked as one of first-year teachers' greatest sources of anxiety and uncertainty (Wolfe & Smith, 1996). A survey conducted by Wolery et al. (1995) reported that 90% of new elementary teachers do not feel prepared in the area of classroom management and believed it to affect the success of their teaching. In addition, public opinion polls over the past 35 years have shown that parents rank classroom management as one of the top problems facing public schools (Rose & Gallup, 2002).

A survey called *National New Teacher Study: Beginning Teachers' Concerns Teaching* was conducted in 2000. The study sought to understand the concerns in classroom management (Meister & Melnick, 2003). Respondents to the on-line survey were 273 first- and second-year teachers from 41 states. Of the respondents, 31% were from rural school districts, 47% were

from suburban districts, and 18% were from urban districts. Seventy-three percent were elementary teachers and 27% were secondary teachers. Twenty-four percent were males and 76% were females. The results showed that 81% of the new teachers did not believe they were well prepared to maintain discipline in the classroom. Yet, 79% of the respondents believed they knew how to identify students with behavior problems before they became too disruptive. The area of biggest concern was that only 46% of the respondents thought that student behavior was not a problem for them. After analyzing the results, the researchers suggested that new teachers need more direct experience in the school setting and continued assistance in classroom management prior to their first year of teaching. Although the majority of the beginning teachers believed they had some preparations in the area prior to completing their teacher education program, they were less confident of their acquired knowledge and skills when they became first-year teachers. The first-year teachers in the study felt they learned classroom management in the confines of a college setting where emphasis was placed in normal management issues (Meister & Melnick, 2003).

Although classroom management alone will not bring about successful teaching, it is virtually crucial for the first-year teacher (Palumbo & Sanacore, 2007). Pupil control is frequently so pronounced that the goal of classroom order often displaces student learning as the definition of teaching effectiveness (Watzke, 2003). Teacher-effectiveness researchers, scrutinizing behaviors of veteran teachers, are beginning to see beyond routine teacher performance and into the subtleties, which give veteran teachers the edge (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Despite the plethora of research on classroom management, this area continues to remain a major problem for first-year teachers (Marso & Pigge, 1994). Jones and Jones (2004) state although there are numerous research studies on classroom management, “many teachers have

received only a limited amount of useful information about how to organize and manage classrooms in order to maximize productive student learning and behavior” (p.8).

While classroom management is a concern for all teachers, Gee (2001) found that classroom management problems are most prevalent for first-year teachers, waning as the years progress. Gee conducted a study of 24 first-year teachers with no teaching experience and 36 graduate students with teaching experience. He found the strongest concern for both groups related to classroom management. While the top concern of both groups was classroom management, 82% of first-year teachers ranked it the number one concern, and only 36% of experienced teachers ranked it as their top concern. Classroom management problems improve as teachers gain experiences, problems are not differentiated between elementary and secondary teachers. Rydell and Henricsson (2004) found that elementary and secondary-level beginning teachers defined and managed discipline problems in much the same way, and that most effective discipline strategies were the most humanistic and the least effective strategies were authoritarian.

Rydell and Henricsson (2004) investigated teachers’ perceptions about the discipline problems they encountered during their first year of teaching. They also examined the effective and ineffective strategies for dealing with problematic student behavior. The 36 participants completed a questionnaire and were interviewed in small groups. The authors reported five types of discipline problems; the most frequently described involved disruption, defiance, and inattention. They concluded that it was imperative that first-year teachers receive help with classroom management issues.

Hertzog (2002) investigated the problems of first-year teachers and recommended that these teachers be provided with a variety of resources such as mentoring programs and

professional development in the area of classroom management. Twelve beginning teachers in their first year participated in the descriptive case study. All taught in a large urban school district. In addition, all participated in a district-based mentoring program. During the study, 10 participants were in their first semester of teaching and two were in their second semester of teaching. Each first-year teacher participated in an initial descriptive interview, completed a weekly questionnaire for 15 weeks, and engaged in biweekly interviews. The results indicated that classroom management was the most occurring problem for the first-year teachers. The perceived problems of the classroom management focused on keeping students busy while working independently during small group activities, particularly during reading instruction.

Diversity Issues

Another area of concern for first-year teachers are diverse issues. Diversity includes but is not limited to minority students, English Language Learners, and special needs students. A major problem of beginning teachers is related to diverse populations and the inclusion of special needs students (Bondy & Davis, 2000; Goodwin, 1994; Jones & Jones, 2004; Thomas, 2007). Teachers are asked to instruct a wide range of students, many of whom are from different backgrounds, who are limited in English, and/or who have disabilities such as learning or emotional distress (Bondy & Davis, 2000). Even in classrooms where the students appear to be from the same cultural group, students will display individual differences influenced by diversity in intellectual and physical abilities, as well as day-to-day living experiences in the home from parental influences. These differences direct the ways students behave; therefore, it is important that beginning teachers understand diversity in order to meet the needs of all students (Peterson et al., 2000; Whitaker, 2000).

Teaching children with diverse needs seems to be a very difficult challenge for many beginning teachers. These teachers have indicated that they are unprepared to meet the needs of students with diverse needs and have requested additional help in these areas (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002; Whitney, Golez, Nagel, & Nieto, 2002).

Minorities. The number of minorities entering school systems increases yearly. Today, approximately 35% of the United States school-age children are ethnic minorities thus consideration must be given to who will be taught as well as how they are to be taught (Peterson et al., 2000). Yet, before understanding how to teach minorities, new teachers must first gain prior cultural knowledge of their minority students. Goodwin (1994) stated that new teachers must recognize their own personal and cultural values and identities in order for them to help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and multicultural groups.

Goodwin (1994) sought to understand the definitions of multicultural education held by 101 first-year teachers. The teachers completed an open-ended questionnaire that was designed to understand their conceptions of multicultural education. The questionnaire asked the teachers to explain the goals of multicultural education, identify multicultural practices they had observed, and then list questions and obstacles to multicultural practices. It was reported that the novices seemed to define multicultural education as an externally-driven idea. What they were prepared to do seemed dependent on how much control they would have, the type of students they worked with, and/or materials or models they used. Less than 20% of the beginning teachers expressed confusion with the concept itself. However, a majority questioned their own abilities on how they taught multicultural education.

While beginning teachers need to understand how to teach children from different backgrounds, school administrators must determine in what sort of environment a multicultural

perspective can flourish (Thomas, 2007). Thomas found that classroom diversity was negatively related to teachers' perceptions of their workplace. He examined 20 new teachers' perceptions of multicultural education. The 20 participants were enrolled in a graduate level class called "Effective Classroom Instruction" offered at a regional university in eastern Kentucky. Of the 20 participants, 12 were in their first year of teaching and the other 8 had less than 2 years of classroom experience. All of the participants were from four school districts. Within the four school districts, there was a combined average household income of just \$17,500. The high school completion rate was only 59.8%, and the college completion rate was only 8.5%.

Using an online discussion board, the 20 participants exchanged over 200 messages during an 11-day period as a class assignment about multicultural education. The data collected also included pre- and post-discussion questionnaires. The results of the study indicated that first-year teachers are more likely to be assigned to diverse classrooms and that classroom diversity held a negative correlation with the average academic ability of the class. A positive correlation was found between classroom diversity and class size, and, in turn, with frequent disciplinary problems. In the end, it was concluded educators must determine which students need multicultural education and how best to present it (Thomas, 2007).

Brewster and Railsback (2001) also suggested that new teachers need to understand their students' diverse backgrounds and support their multicultural environment. Specifically, they should seek help from minority colleagues, teach appropriate materials on their students' heritage, and support and respect their students' background. This should not just be for beginning teachers, but supported by the entire school.

Guay (1994) recommended that having a veteran mentor who comes from a different background can help new teachers better understand the minority students in their classroom.

Guay investigated the perceptions of recent graduates of elementary and secondary teachers regarding the preparation to deal with minority students. The study was conducted using 300 randomly selected names from a professional teacher organization. Each subject was mailed a questionnaire, and a response of 227 individuals comprised the study results. The researcher reported that most of the teachers surveyed felt less prepared to teach children from a different background than themselves. The findings suggested a need for more professional development in areas of diversity, specifically using a veteran teacher who is successful in the areas of dealing with students of different cultures and backgrounds.

English Language Learners. Another area of diversity includes students whose primary language is not English. Teaching these children can be a daunting task for many new teachers. These are children who may not speak English at all or least do not speak, understand, and write English with the same facility as their classmates. They are commonly known as English Language Learners (ELL). Whether ELLs are newcomers to the United States, or from generations of heritage language speakers, they are at a disadvantage. ELLs are even more at a disadvantage when they are in a beginning teacher's classroom (Zehler, 1994).

A national survey reported that the total number of ELL students in public schools was 4.5 million or roughly 10% of the total U.S. population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). From the same survey, it was found that of the 41% of teachers nationwide with ELL students, only 12.5% participated in 8 or more hours of related ELL professional development within their first 3 years of teaching. Fewer than 8% of teachers reported 8 or more hours of ELL-specific professional development (NCES, 2002). In fact, according to a report from the U.S. Department of Education, "addressing the needs of limited English proficient students" is

the professional development area in which teachers are least likely to participate (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2001).

It was also found that only 17% of new teachers of ELLs felt “very well prepared” to teach students with limited English proficiency, while the majority (60%) felt only “somewhat” or “moderately” well-prepared, and 23% reported feeling “not prepared at all” (NCELA, 2001, p.2). Unfortunately, it has been reported that new teachers have little awareness multiculturalism of ELL students. Bruch, Jehangir, Jacobs, and Ghore (2004) reported a gap between the theory and practice of how education is viewed by novice teachers and multicultural educational specialists. They stated that “new teachers’ simplistic view of diversity allows them to comfortably celebrate diversity without having an awareness of, much less critiquing and transforming, the social injustices and educational inequities that exist in today’s society” (p. 19).

While new teachers have awareness of multicultural education, they often underestimate the seriousness of it, so schools of education develop curricula that make teachers aware of cultural, racial, and ethnic differences (Zimmerman, 2005). Zimmerman examined beginning teachers’ knowledge and perceptions of multiculturalism. In the spring of 2003, K-12 novice teachers participated in audio-taped interviews, responding to questions about how they perceived multicultural education and about the training that teachers receive in multicultural education. Each teacher also completed a questionnaire for collecting demographic information, such as age, race, gender, and years of teaching experience. The interview questions focused on two broad areas. The first area of consideration was how the participants, as classroom teachers perceived multicultural education. The second consideration was the multicultural education curriculum itself. A careful reading of the transcripts illustrated that while all of the teachers

viewed multicultural education from the perspective of “celebratory,” none of them talked about it in a way that demonstrated an awareness of multicultural education as transformative.

The results indicated that most of the teachers talked about the need for multicultural education that promoted awareness and acceptance for them as teachers and among their students. There were only a few instances in which teachers alluded to a critical perspective of multicultural education. Zimmerman (2005) concluded that schools of education need to develop curricula that make teachers are aware of cultural, racial, and ethnic differences, so they can celebrate each child and help each child learn to value who they are and where they come from. They should learn the importance of critiquing society and questioning their own beliefs and values. Finally, teachers should learn to see themselves as change agents, to take their critique and implement changes in their teaching, in their schools, and in their communities.

Novice teachers see themselves as agents of change. Their belief that they can make a difference is demonstrated by their excitement for teaching. Yet, this excitement may be dampened if novice teachers do not fully understand the value system and culture of their learning communities (Zimmerman, 2005). Luft and Roehrig (2005) reported that, while first-year teachers in their study were excited to work in a community that consisted primarily of Hispanic students, the novices had not developed an orientation toward their students that valued their culture.

Luft and Roehrig (2005) explored the practices of three English-speaking beginning science teachers. The teachers in the study were in their first year of teaching and worked primarily with limited English speaking Hispanic students in rural and urban schools. At different periods throughout the year, data were collected extensively to document the beliefs, practices, and experiences of the beginning science teachers. From the study, the researchers

concluded that the beginning teachers' classroom practices lacked several of the qualities described as important in working with Hispanic students, such as respecting language and culture, linking to the community, or even using historical examples from Hispanic culture to illustrate science concepts. Instead, the teachers harbored a mix of high and low expectations for their students and found few opportunities to connect instruction directly to the lives of their students.

The need to connect learning to all students, especially ELL students, has become more apparent in recent years. However, not all first-year teachers understand how to interact with these students. It has been shown that many teachers, including beginning teachers, are unprepared for the special training and complexities of teaching ELLs because of lack of training in professional development, including mentoring (Zehler, 1994). Achinstein and Barrett, (2004) examined 15 new teacher-mentor pairs over 2 years in northern California through mentoring conversations, classroom observations, and interviews with mentors and novices working with English Language Learners in elementary school. The study explored how novices and mentors come to "frame" and negotiate student diversity in the classroom. The authors described three ways of viewing classroom relations that the new teachers and their mentors used: managerial, human relations, and political.

In three cases of the sample, the researchers were able to explore mentor differences in use of frames. Two of the mentors demonstrated dominant approaches across novices in their caseload. While one mentor had a managerial-dominant approach in both cases, another mentor had a more balancing approach in all three cases. When the mentors helped the new teachers reframe, they focused the novices on individual learners and often overlooked subgroups and their learning needs. Reframing spotlighted ignored dynamics that affected student learning. The

mentors utilized processes such as observation data on student actions, analysis of student work, and scripts of teacher-student interactions that helped the new teachers bring students into focus. Yet, reframing was no easy task for the mentor (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004).

First, it exposed dilemmas in mentoring, including being a supporter versus the critic; addressing competing school cultures and conflicting frames; and facing limitations in mentors' repertoire of frames, thus possibly creating a tension between the mentor's role as a friend and critic. The mentor language in the conferences examined in the study included indirect suggestions and less confrontational exchanges as mentors sought to maintain rapport with the novices while extending novices' thinking. Secondly, mentors struggled with holding frames that differed from those of their mentees and school cultures (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004).

A further tension for mentors was that some of the frames conflicted. The final tension resulted from mentors having different repertoires for framing. The implications of the study suggested that mentors examine their ways of viewing students and learn to reframe when appropriate. Also, the evidence from the study demonstrated that mentors supported reframing of managerial concerns to focus on multiple ways of understanding classroom challenges. In conclusion, the article challenged current thinking about novice development by revealing how mentors offer new teachers a repertoire of frames to predict challenges and develop alternative approaches to meet the diverse needs of students who were limited in English (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004).

Special needs. While there are many studies regarding minorities and English Language Learners, diversity is not partial only to those. Inclusion situations in which novice teachers feel unprepared to address the unique curricular need of special education students can present problems (Boe et al., 2007; Bondy & Davis, 2000; Lopes, Montecito, & Sil, 2004; Sprague &

Pennell, 2000). In addition, with the enactment of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, schools must offer equal educational opportunities for students with a variety of disabilities (Miles, 2001).

The inclusion of students with disabilities has placed increasing demands on classroom teachers. General education teachers are being asked to include more students with severe disabilities in classroom settings. However, many general education teachers are unprepared to meet the demands that this increasing student diversity presents (Henley, Ramsey, & Algozzine, 1999). Beginning general education teachers are challenged by the needs of students in inclusive classrooms, as they are often less prepared to make accommodations for individual students (Boe et al., 2007).

Some beginning teachers struggle to deal with the realism of inclusion. Brownell, Yeager, Sindelar, and Riley (2004) investigated the perceptions of new teachers who taught in full-inclusion classrooms. Data from 10 first-year teachers within the research revealed that many new teachers who were previously in favor of inclusive education were no longer as accepting of it. It was also apparent that a number of the teachers surveyed struggled to deal with the realities of inclusion within the applied educational setting because of lack of skills and special funding.

Boyer and Lee (2001) conducted a case study that involved a beginning teacher in a full-inclusion classroom for six kindergarten students with autism. There were five boys and one girl who had very similar profiles in terms of educational deficits and needs. The researchers sought to find out what challenges the teacher experienced during her first year. The researchers met with the new teacher on a weekly basis and observed her classroom once a month over a period of the school year.

In their analysis, the researchers reported three variables: (a) current certification, (b) perceived stress, and (c) perceived school climate. Boyer and Lee (2001) concluded that the new teacher's support through her first year of teaching came from multiple levels. Her mentoring program provided continued professional development and the physical presence of a mentor who knew exactly what she was experiencing in a classroom for students with autism. The mentor provided actual administrative help and instructional support in adapting curricula and designing unique lesson plans to meet the needs of individual students. At the end of the study, it was recommended that new teachers had knowledge of what is expected of them, had opportunities to improve their skills, and were involved in making important decisions about their classrooms.

Parental involvement. Although the issues of parents are rarely mentioned as a cause for teachers leaving the profession (Blasé & Greenfield, 1982; Gee, 2001), it has been ranked as a major problem and a stress related issue for beginning teachers (Gee, 2001; Richardson, 2008; Wilson & Ireton, 1997). Parents can be intimidating for beginning teachers. Beginning teachers are often worried about meeting with parents and getting approval from them. In many cases, this fear is due to the fact that it is an untested experience. The dread of confrontation, either on an individual basis or in a conference with others, has been shown to be stressful for novices (Gee, 2001; Wilson & Ireton, 1997).

New teachers reported in a survey that they were not satisfied with their relationship with students' parents. Furthermore, new teachers reported engaging and working with parents as their greatest challenge and the area they were least prepared to manage during their first year of teaching. Only 25% of new teachers described the relationship as very satisfying and 20% described it as unsatisfying (The Metropolitan Life Survey, 2005).

The U.S. Department of Education (2005) reported that new teachers expressed that they were distraught by the lack of parental support parents have for their child's education. The new teachers also reported they need help on how to involve parents in their child's educational success.

The following tips were provided by the U.S. Department of Education (2005) on how beginning teachers can engage parents in their child's education:

(a) Contact parents early and before a problem occurs, particularly when there is good news to report; (b) Consider writing a weekly newsletter or report on classroom learning or activities; (c) Invite parents to come into the classroom and assign them tasks if they are willing; (d) Involve them in reading groups and remedial groups if possible, being aware that not all parents read or write English; (e) Let parents know how they can reinforce classroom learning at home and consider asking them to sign a contract requiring them to make children complete homework and other home learning activities; (f) Visit families in their homes, if possible, to see firsthand how well learning is supported there, (g) Address parents' concerns head on and if taking a pedagogical approach that raises questions, work to show parents the benefits of your methods and explain your reasoning to them, and (h) Hold a parent meeting the first month of the school year to talk about expectations for student achievement and behavior, and leave time for questions. (p.17)

First-year teachers must develop a workable plan for parental communication.

Establishing a plan in advance may allow the first-year teacher to have a greater comfort level as the veteran teacher (Melnick & Meister, 2008).

Melnick and Meister (2008) compared beginning and experienced teachers' concerns with respect to managing classroom behavior, parent interactions, and academic preparation. The study examined the relationships by comparing a national sample of beginning teachers to a national cross-section of experienced teachers to ascertain if beginning teachers' concerns diminish with experience. Significant differences were found on the Classroom Management and Parent Interaction scales while no differences were found on the Academic Preparation scales. The findings with the most significant difference was that experienced teachers feel better

prepared to communicate with parents when conflicts arise, send more frequent reports home about students' progress, and utilize multiple methods of communication with parents. It was clearly noted that novice teachers need instruction and experiences in communicating with parents. Teacher education programs and mentoring programs would be well advised to include activities in their programs that help novices develop these skills.

Planning

Regardless of the quality of their preparation, teachers in their first year face an endless amount of paperwork and lesson planning (Brown, 1998; Moir, 2000; Schmidt, 2005). The overwhelming work can cause frustration among many novice teachers (Moir, 2000). A first-year teacher stated her frustrations during a focus-group interview. She said that her major problem was "Preparing lesson plans, changing them to fit students' needs, and constantly grading papers while preparing for the next day of teaching" (Reig et al., 2007, p. 221).

Schmidt (2005) conducted a year-long qualitative study comparing 10 undergraduate preservice teachers' lesson planning for the classes and/or individual lessons they taught in a university and 10 first-year teachers' lesson planning for the classes they taught at their schools. Data analysis revealed that these preservice teachers held differing views of lesson planning from each other and from the first-year teachers. Four themes emerged: (a) concerns about knowing how to begin to plan, (b) difficulty identifying what the children needed to learn, (c) comparisons of thinking about teaching and planning with actual written plans, and (d) limited transfer of in-class experiences to teaching. Suggestions for teacher educators include acknowledging the complex nonlinear relationship between planning skills, teaching experience, and professional knowledge; and structuring guided experiences with a variety of lesson

planning formats. It was found that a classroom teacher with a mentor has a better understanding of lesson planning than one who is in the pre-service level.

Not only do new teachers with mentors have a better understanding of lesson planning, but teachers with more than 1 year of experience have a better understanding as well. Brown (1998) compared lesson plans from three groups of teachers: experienced teachers, novice teachers with less than 3 years of experience, and first-year teachers with no teaching experience. The lesson plans were based on a textbook listening activity that included directions for listening to and responding to a taped monologue. Problematic aspects of the book's directions were analyzed and possible approaches and activities were anticipated. The subjects' lesson plans were then analyzed and compared for focus and structure of the pre- and post-listening activities they included. The final results were quite different than some previous research studies. It showed that experienced teachers focus on linguistic elements in the text in planning pre-listening activities, while some inexperienced teachers went beyond the text to include issues in the broader world.

Mentoring First-year Teachers

The rationale for mentoring new teachers has been based on the need to assist novice teachers in the educational field (Ganser, 2002). It has been noted that mentors should be carefully screened and be willing to advise and support new teachers in a nonjudgmental way. Only those veteran teachers who are secure in themselves and their teaching abilities should be assigned a mentee (Wong, 2004).

The first step in mentoring is to ensure that the new teacher has the appropriate placement--a placement that can help reduce their stress and allow for a greater chance of success (Johnson et al., 2001). To achieve that success, there are several factors that should be

considered. Flynn and Nolan (2008) asserted that there have been four reoccurring factors that, overall, could affect how first-year teachers are mentored. The factors include (a) the matching and selection process, (b) time, (c) support, and (d) communication.

Matching and Selection Process

Many school systems are unsure which first-year teacher and mentor should be matched together and sometimes select mentor teachers out of convenience. Furthermore, many teachers feel frustrated because they feel that they should have a choice in choosing their mentor (Brock & Grady, 1998; Johnson et.al, 2001; Kilburg, 2002). A novice teacher who just completed 1 year of her school system's mentoring program stated the following:

The people who have been selected to mentor may not be the most appropriate personality type . . . they've been chosen for the wrong reasons . . . maybe because they teach the same subject or grade . . . and they think mentoring is based on a lot of housekeeping things . . . and they think they've done their job when they've been given that information. (Carter, 2001, p.12)

Because of situations like the one stated above, it is crucial that school systems carefully consider the matching and selection process of the mentoring program. To be successful, the selection and matching process of the mentor and the new teacher must be highly considered (Kilburg, 2002).

Kilburg and Hancock (2006) indicated that a rigorous mentor selection process was needed. The study examined 149 mentoring teams in four school districts over a 2-year period. Data collection was coordinated by one the researchers who was also the trainer for the four school districts' mentoring programs. Each year of the study, the survey and interview processes were repeated. From the analysis of data, the research team identified a common set of recurring problems during both years. Intervention strategies were then identified, introduced, and assessed. In this study, seven of the new teachers did not have mentors with teaching experience

at the same grade level they were assigned to teach. The researchers concluded that it is important to document a more complete account of problems that mentoring teams encounter as they work through the transitional process of developing and sustaining new mentoring programs and mentoring relationships. Planning and carrying out regular conversations with mentoring teams regarding their practices helps to build confidence and a professional culture that values relationships, reflection, and collaborative practices. Part of managing the health of any mentoring program is developing an assessment process that is in the best interest of all participants.

It is recommended that accounts must be taken into consideration during the matching of mentors and mentees. Cox (2005) suggested that five different accounts be taken into consideration during the matching process: (a) the age of the mentee; (b) geographical location of where the mentor and mentee could meet; (c) gender, because there was only a few male mentors and mentees; (d) the age of the mentees' children, as it was thought that a mentor who has similar aged children or older children would understand their mentee's circumstances more readily; and (e) the career goals, interest, cultural background, or current educational attainment of both mentor and mentee, in order to ensure creditability for the mentor. In Cox's study, before being matched, the mentor and mentee filled out a questionnaire which provided additional information on what times they could meet, what extra knowledge or skills the mentor could offer, and what particular help the mentee was seeking.

The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of the matching process in formal mentoring. For the study, there were 52 mentoring partnerships. The researcher collected data through pre-matching questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with 17 mentors and 2 mentoring scheme coordinators, focus groups, mentor and mentee evaluations of the mentoring

process, and mentors' reflective journal entries. The results indicated that the matching process alone did not benefit the mentee, but the training of the mentor in how to work with and understand the mentee in addition to the selection process was beneficial (Cox, 2005).

The matching of mentoring partners is important to the viability of the relationship and its ultimate success. A successful program allows the mentee to choose from a group of mentors or a mentor can choose from a group of mentees. Pairs can be matched according to expressed needs of mentors and mentee, but both the mentor and mentee need to be in agreement (Daloz, 1999; Hale, 2000).

School systems must go beyond the familiar cultural, gender, and personality aspects of diversity and consider matching characteristics such as (a) different work personality and behavior styles, (b) congruity in preferred learning styles, (c) degree of eagerness in entering into the mentoring relationship, (d) the relationship and variance between skill and will factors, (e) generosity and optimism of the partners, and (f) similarity in the need to balance autonomy and nurturing (Parkay, 2001).

Furthermore, it has been suggested to have in place a recognized and agreed selection and matching process that allows for an initial 2- to 3-month mentoring relationship, followed by a review in which both mentor and mentee can decide to discontinue the relationship without fault. It is essential to provide the partners with the opportunities and the skills to build their relationship in the challenging moments they will inevitably share and also to provide the means by which they may part as friends and seek out another mentor and mentee, if this becomes necessary (Kajs, 2002). Sometimes no matter how successful a program is in the matching process, it may fail.

Flynn and Nolan (2008) discussed how a previous successful mentoring program in a suburban middle-class community in New York State failed. A significant factor in the previous programs' successes resulted from the matching and selection process. Although they made every effort to ensure success by having a selection committee and matching based on evidence of grade level, mastery of subject matter, mentor's willingness to participate, evidence of professional growth, and ability to have a trusting relationship, the program was not successful. The results indicated that because of new administrations at the district and local school levels, and a union president unwilling to promote the program and implement it correctly, the program failed. Flynn and Nolan concluded that if local schools and school systems were supportive and willing to implement the program correctly, then their model may have ensured success for the beginning teachers.

Time

In several studies, time was noted as a significant factor in mentoring programs (Arends, 1998; Ganser, 1995; Ganser, Bainer, Brock, Noe, Stinson, & Giebelhaus, 1998). Lack of time has been shown to be one of the most challenging aspects of the mentoring relationship and determine in some cases whether the mentor and mentees' relationship will be a success or failure (Ganser et al., 1998). Kilburg (2004) conducted a study on mentoring team problems encountered during a mentee's first year of teaching. The results showed by far the most difficult issue was lack of time. It was noted that if the first-year teacher is not given ample time to meet and discuss issues, then the mentoring experience is seen as no more than a token gesture.

Kilburg and Hancock (2006) conducted a similar study. They concluded that when the mentor and mentee's time is reduced because of building proximity, part-time versus full-time

teaching status, busy schedules, or lack of release time, the relationship will very likely to be impacted in a negative way, and the mentoring experience is not beneficial.

The typical teacher's schedule includes little time without direct teaching responsibilities of students. The school principal must be supportive and build in time for the beginning teacher and mentor to meet during the school day (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001).

The National Center for Educational Statistics (2002) indicated that the efficacy of mentoring is related to the amount of time a mentor and mentee have time to meet. In a study by the National Foundation for Improvement of Education (1999), it was found that 38% of mentees who met with their mentors just a few times a year reported substantial improvements to their instructional skills. That figure jumped to 88% when they met on a weekly basis.

Some mentoring programs do not provide any release time for the mentors and mentees. When this is the case it is often because there are few expectations placed on the mentoring pair. Typically, these programs only expect work on orientation and friendly support of the mentors. If there are expectations for mentoring that go beyond orientation and friendship, then the program must provide the time during the school day for the mentoring pair to interact (Sweeney, 2008).

Although nothing can take the place of the mentor and mentee's time, Sweeney (2008) offers several alternatives when there is no release time for the mentor and mentee. He suggested that new teachers and their mentors be assigned to one classroom with 30 students or to two adjacent classrooms with 45 students. The two teachers can coordinate their schedules and class planning, sometimes jointly teaching, or dividing to groups for instruction. The mentor is able to provide leadership, experience, and modeling in both classrooms, allowing observations and mentoring to be almost continuous. Another suggestion was that one mentor could teach one half-day in the morning, and the other mentor could teach in the afternoon, both in the same

classroom and having joint planning at lunch and normal preparation times. Furthermore, Sweeney also suggested for the teacher to set up a camera in the back or on the side of the classroom and just leave it on for the appropriate time period to capture the mentee. The tape can be viewed later by the mentor and by the mentoring pair to form the basis for their analysis of the lesson.

Support

Unfortunately, there are many teachers with stress related stories about their first year of teaching. There is also the feeling of loneliness and isolation of first-year teachers (Brewster & Railsback, 2001). Yet, beginning teachers find it difficult to ask for support from their fellow teachers and administrators. Several studies have indicated that one of the important needs that a novice teacher should have is emotional support (Jonson, 2002; Miller & Fraser, 2000; Rieg et al., 2007; Whitaker, 2000). As beginning teachers are adapting to their careers, they need a mentor with whom they can confide and collaborate. Providing that support is important because it helps the new teacher understand that he or she is valued and that someone is there to listen and care (Brownell, Murdock, & Walker, 2008). When emotional support is limited or not being provided, the new teacher can be expected to feel insecure and frustrated, and lack confidence (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Kilbug, 2002).

Meyer (2002) indicated that having an effective mentor can reduce feelings of isolation, increase confidence, and encourage an exchange of dialogue on good teaching practices between novice teachers and more experienced educators. Experienced teachers can mentor and, in some situations, team-teach as well as create support for new teachers. The emotional support of novice teachers is important for the development of healthier attitudes and perceptions of

teaching. If the novice teachers' emotional needs are met, then they can easily cope with the stressors of teaching (Whitaker, 2000).

Without these coping strategies, a first-year teacher's tactics for dealing with the stress of teaching could inevitably affect the instructional practices in the classroom (Johnson et al., 2001). It is the professional responsibility of the school and school system to provide support for all beginning teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Stanulis (2002) found that expert mentors can help the beginning teachers develop self-confidence and awareness of themselves.

Edwards (2002) examined the perceived effects of a first-year teacher mentoring program. The results indicated that 75% of the participants said that having a mentor their first year impacted their decision to stay in teaching. The participants emphasized that the emotional support the mentor provided, the nonjudgmental feedback, and the opportunity to communicate regularly were important to their staying in teaching.

There is a crucial importance of regular communication between the mentor and the mentee. When there is a lack of communication, then the mentor and mentee's relationship will not function (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Gilbert, 2005). Fletcher and Barrett (2004) conducted an 81-item on-line survey of how mentors communicate with their mentees and administrators at their school. The study focused on Grades 2-6, representing all elementary level teachers. Approximately 74.3% of the teachers were in their first year and had worked with their mentor 9 months or less. The results of 70 new teachers showed that mentors helped improve the mentees' instructional skills and teacher strategies. It was indicated that the mentees specifically needed help in analyzing the students' work, assisting with lesson planning, developing the curriculum, and helping with diverse students.

Mentoring Programs

History of Mentoring Programs

Since the early 1970s, there has been some type of program to help beginning teachers. It has grown from mere tokenism to the widespread creation of mentoring programs, often in response to state mandates. One aspect of the 1980s reform era was the implementation of new teacher mentoring programs. These programs were designed to have mentor teachers assist and support new teachers in their professional development. At that time, teacher mentoring programs took on much ownership at the local and state levels, but the major policy initiative for their emergence occurred at the state level (Fidellar & Haselkorn, 1999).

Early state efforts for personnel reform began with pay-for performance systems and career ladder programs intended to improve and reward teacher mentors. It became apparent during the reform movement, however, that teacher mentoring programs were needed to retain effective teachers (Fidellar & Haselkorn, 1999).

In the late 1980s, the second movement of reform shifted the focus from accountability for experienced teachers and professional growth to support for novice teachers. In 1984, The National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification collected data on support systems for new teachers. At that time, only eight states had implemented such programs (Johnson et al., 2001).

By 1991, 31 states had implemented some type of new teacher mentoring programs. The Center for Policy Research in Education (1992) reported that the development of new educational policies and programs during the reform movement came from state implementation rather than local school systems. After the 1990s, the make-up of new teacher mentoring programs changed. Before, mentoring programs were considered an optional type of assistance

for novice teachers and were just support and encouragement for new teachers (Odell & Ferraro, 1992).

Today, new teacher mentoring programs attempt to reduce the high attrition rate among beginning teachers. More importantly, these programs provide help to put effective teaching techniques into practice. Mentoring roles, responsibilities, and activities are increasingly linked to external standards (Norman & Ganser, 2004).

Mandated Mentoring Programs

Although almost every state and local school system has a mentoring program in place, not all are mandated. In 1999, more than 30 states mandated their teacher mentoring programs (Creating a Teacher Mentoring Program, 1999). Yet, requiring this mentoring did not necessarily mean that the programs were comprehensive and effective or that funding was available (Hurst & Reding, 2002).

Quality Counts (2003) reported that only 16 states were able to finance their mentoring programs. Furthermore, it was indicated that nine states had a designated time for the mentor and mentee to collaborate, eight required them to be matched by grade or subject level, and nine required that mentors be compensated for their time.

Some states have made efforts in developing a comprehensive program that has shown long-term success (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). According to Jambor (1995), California and North Carolina have been the frontrunners of state-mandated mentor programs. California somewhat opened the way for comprehensive mentoring programs throughout the United States after being one of the first states to react to the 1983 National Commission of Excellence in Education Report, *A Nation at Risk*. California's program was directed at keeping and recognizing expert

teachers as well as improving student achievement. North California's efforts also focused on improving student achievement and retaining teachers.

The state of Missouri has required school systems to have a developmental program for novice teachers, according to the *1985 Excellence Education Act*. The plan consists of goals such as providing methods to assess the effectiveness of the mentoring program to ensure that new teachers are receiving the objectives to improve their teaching practices (Hurst & Reding, 2002).

While efforts were made, some programs have not been as effective as needed. Although states such as Georgia, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and New Mexico have tried to implement successful programs, each state required minimal objectives that left the majority of the design to the local school systems and thus resulted in several mentoring programs being implemented in name only (Hurst & Reding, 2002).

Alabama's Mentoring Program

One of the most recent mentoring programs is in Alabama. In 2007, Alabama's Education Budget provided more than \$3.9 million to cover mentoring costs. This was the result of Governor Bob Riley's Commission on Quality Teaching's goal thus the creation of Alabama Teacher Mentoring (Alabama Education News, 2007).

The need for the program was based on research. The program is designed to reduce teacher attrition, reduce recruitment and retention costs, and increase student achievement. There are six required components to the program: (a) Each new teacher receives mentoring for a minimum of 2 years with an option of a third year based on mastery of competencies, (b) Active teachers mentor new teachers on a 1-to-1 basis, Retired teachers mentor new teachers on no more than a 15-to-1 ratio, (c) Each new mentor must be chosen by a committee comprised of teachers or an administrator (d) Mentors must successfully complete the Alabama Beginning Teacher

Mentor Training. Individual mentors for each new teacher must be in place by October 1 of each school year, (e) Mentors receive a stipend of \$1,000.00 per year for each new teacher they mentor, (f) Mentors and mentees will have at least 2.5 hours of contact time during each week of the school year, (g) Each mentored new teacher completes regularly scheduled assessments of mentor program effectiveness.

The most pivotal point of the mentoring relationship is the mentor. The teacher mentor has to meet certain criteria before he/she is assigned a mentee. First, the mentor teacher has to have a minimum of 3 years successful experience and subject-area expertise. The mentor teacher has to also demonstrate effectiveness in classroom instruction via provision of such evidence as (a) student achievement growth including standardized test scores; (b) portfolio of student work documenting evidence of student learning; and (c) documentation of effective teaching, results of observations by principals or supervisors, videotaped lesson. Finally, the mentor teachers have to demonstrate excellence in communicating and collaborating with colleagues. The prospective mentors must provide recommendations from a minimum of two colleagues attesting to their ability to work collaboratively toward professional growth and improvement goals (Alabama Department of Education Classroom Improvement Section, 2007).

The Alabama State Department of Education and University of South Alabama conducted a survey and found that less than 2% of first-year teachers indicated they would not return to teaching, compared with about 10% nationwide. Alabama school systems have reported they hired 25% fewer new teachers this year than last. The survey included about 2,500 mentors and first-year teachers to measure the success of the mentoring program. Of those first-year teachers surveyed, 84% thought their mentor was extremely important and 88% indicated their

mentors provided exceptional emotional support and confidence building (Alabama Press Office, 2008).

Components of Mentoring Programs

School systems may have different types of mentoring programs. According to Breaux and Wong (2003), there are several common components that make mentoring programs successful. Successful programs have pre-training approximately 4 to 5 days before the beginning of a school year. These mentoring programs are not just limited to 1 year. They are ongoing and continuous for several years. The programs should include study groups in which beginning teachers network and support one another and give the mentees ample opportunities to visit demonstration classrooms taught by expert teachers.

No one specific mentoring program can meet the needs of every state and every school system, but mentoring should not be seen as an option. Although many schools and school districts are attempting to improve the entry of beginning teachers into their first teaching positions through mentoring programs, schools and school districts continue to provide unspecialized, infrequent supervision and staff development that ignores the needs of beginning teachers (Andrews & Quinn, 2005). Mentoring programs that are well-organized and consistent are the exception to the rule (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Fideler, 2000).

Achinstein and Athanases (2003) suggested that the first and obvious purpose of the mentoring program should be to improve educational practices and student achievement through assisting both new teachers and experienced teachers. Lindgren (2005) attempted to examine and explain the behavior of seven new beginning teachers and how a mentoring program affected them. The researcher recorded and reported their observations and experiences. Then after

analysis of the reports, it was concluded that mentoring is an effective way to support first-year teachers.

An exemplary mentoring program should provide positive information that can lead to improved perceptions by mentees as well as mentors (Ballantyne & Hansford, 2005).

Mentorships must be implemented properly and provide opportunities for the novice teacher to research teaching practices that benefit students. Mentorships should not just be about veteran teachers assisting with basic survival skills. Mentors should focus on demonstrating effective teaching strategies and building the confidence and sense of belonging of their mentees (Gray & Behan, 2005). Mentoring programs are meant to provide professional and personal assistance for the novice teacher. A good mentoring program has expert mentors that can provide support that can drastically reduce teacher attrition (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Udelhofen & Larson, 2003).

Several researchers have formulated specific criteria of what makes a successful mentoring program. There are many important factors to consider when implementing an effective mentoring program for novice teachers. Research from Alabama's Best Practices Center (2001) suggests that successful mentoring programs should (a) train support personnel in the process of evaluation, observation, and clinical supervision; (b) provide continuous information to the mentees regarding the system, the profession, and the teaching process; (c) receive support from the state and local teacher organization units; and (d) recognize that professional development is a continuum and provide ongoing support to novice teachers.

Moving From a Novice to Expert Teacher

One of the current focuses in education is teacher quality and effectiveness. Increasingly, educational professionals are emphasizing the impact of student achievement of novice and veteran teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004; Rice, 2003).

Developing this effectiveness is considered crucial to the improvement of classroom instruction and educational innovation (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Making changes in education ultimately depends on the teachers. Yet, educators are unsure what the problems are and how best to develop teacher quality and effectiveness. Furthermore, creating and maintaining a consistent workforce of teachers can be quite challenging. It is difficult retain teachers in a profession that is poorly rewarded and many times lacking support (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002).

Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) reviewed classic and contemporary theory research on teaching, learning, and development. They acknowledged that, since the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for effective teaching are not something that can be completely developed in their student teaching programs, the interns need to be equipped for lifelong learning.

Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) described three principles to facilitate beginning teachers' development into "adaptive experts." These principles address (a) teachers' dispositions about the world and teaching and how these dispositions may impact teaching negatively; (b) the factual, theoretical, conceptual, and organizational foundation that allows teachers to enact what they know in the classroom; and (c) the metacognitive approach to instruction that can help teachers take control of their own learning by providing tools for analysis of the complex classroom events and situations.

According to the authors, the ways in which new teachers learn and develop in the classroom are dependent upon personal and contextual factors and affect the ways they change their thinking and their practice (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Richardson and Placier (2001) describe teacher change in terms of "learning development, socialization, growth,

improvement, implementation of something new or different, cognitive and affective change, and self-reflection” (p. 905). Change for new teachers is a process, rather than an event (Guskey, 2000), whereby “individuals alter their ways of thinking and doing” (Hopkins, Ainscow, & West, 1994, p. 41). A key issue in beginning mentoring programs relates to the development of skills as the dispositions change and growth comes in the teacher’s particular content area. It becomes important to base beginning programs on strengthening those areas so that the teacher is able to bridge his/her knowledge to learning to teach students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents a description of the research methodology and procedures used in this study. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of first-year teachers and their mentors regarding their school system's mandated mentoring program. This study also examined the perceived effects of the program.

The current chapter was designed to describe the methods and procedures that were used in fulfilling the stated purpose of the investigation. For a clear understanding of each component of the research project, the chapter was divided into seven sections: research design, permission for study, research questions, researcher positionality, setting and participants, data sources, and analysis of data.

Research Design

This was a mixed-method study. One part of the study used quantitative research with the use of a survey. The other part of the study used qualitative research with use of focus group interviews. Using this approach had many advantages. When different approaches are used to focus on the same phenomenon and they provide the same result, corroboration was achieved, which means you superior evidence existed for the result. Other important reasons for conducting mixed research were to complement one set of results with another, to expand a set of results, or to discover something that would have been missed if only a quantitative or a qualitative approach had been used (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham,1989).

Green et al. (1989) discussed five major reasons that may improve the mixed method approach: (a) the use of triangulation, (b) the use of complementarity, which clarified the results from one method by using another method, (c) the development of steps in the research process, (d) the results initiated new research questions, and (e) the study explored specific areas of each method.

Permission for Study

Before the collection of any data, permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained. The IRB permission is included in Appendix A. To maximize anonymity, all the participants' names were changed. Permission from the school system in which this study was conducted was also obtained.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the perceptions of first-year teachers regarding their school system's mandated mentoring program?
2. What are the perceptions of first-year teacher mentors regarding their school system's mandated mentoring program?
3. What are the perceived effects of the school system's mandated mentoring program?

Researcher Positionality

As the researcher of this study, I am currently a principal of a K-5 elementary school in North-Central Alabama. As I wrote my research proposal, I changed positions from assistant principal to interim principal and then to principal. Prior to the position of principal, I held positions as an elementary assistant principal, fifth grade elementary teacher, middle school

guidance counselor, and elementary guidance counselor at two different schools in the same school system.

I have been active in the field of education and employed by the same school system for 14 years. I hold a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education, Master of Science degree in Elementary Education, with certifications for the positions of school counseling and educational leadership, as well as an Educational Specialist degree in Elementary Education.

During my first year of teaching, I was assigned a mentor. Help was only given by the mentor if I asked. There was no release time given for mentor/mentee conferencing or common planning. At that time, my school system did not have a mandated mentoring program in place. There were no guidelines, handbooks, or training regarding the program. It was not a structured program, only an informal one. All first-year teachers were assigned a mentor.

Several years later, as an experienced teacher, I became a mentor teacher. Again, the school system did not mandate a mentoring program and provided very little help to the mentors and mentees. At that time, I decided that I wanted my mentee's experience to be different than my previous experience as a first-year teacher. I made efforts, but even as before, there were no guidelines or handbooks or common release and planning time to assist the mentors and mentees. The only thing I knew to do was be supportive. I visited with my mentee on a regular basis, and asked her how I could help her. Sporadically, I observed her teaching. I just did what I thought was beneficial to my mentee. Once my school system mandated a mentoring program, I knew that I wanted to conduct research on the topic.

For this research study, I was responsible for the collection of data. Researchers can all have biases, which can negatively or positively affect a study. I have been actively involved in new teacher mentoring programs for the past several years and with my current position as a

school administrator, I am responsible for the evaluation of first-year teachers who were participants in the study. Furthermore, because of my background as a former mentee and mentor, I had a strong bias for the mentoring program to be successful. Although, it was necessary to avoid personal judgments throughout this study, I believe that mandated mentoring programs can be beneficial if they are well-planned, provide for common planning time, and have embedded professional development. It is my desire to provide insights to my school system to further improve the program.

Recordings of the interviews and triangulation of data decreased the possibility of my subjectivity biasing the study results. I assumed the role of the interviewer, transcriber, and data interpreter.

Setting and Participants

Setting

The site was a public mid-sized school system located in North-Central Alabama. The total population of the school system was approximately 11,000 students from kindergarten through 12th grades. There was an alternative school, career and technology school, and a special education child development center for children with severe disabilities. Of the students in the school system, 51% were eligible for either free or reduced lunch meals.

Thirty-five percent of the teachers in the district held bachelors' degrees, while the other 65% had masters' degrees, educational specialists' degrees, or doctoral degrees. There were approximately 540 certified teachers in the school system of which 340 were elementary education teachers and 200 were secondary teachers. All of the elementary teachers were 100% highly qualified. Based on the school years of 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, the school system

made adequate yearly progress, having met 27 out of 27 goals. Furthermore, this was the second year the school system had participated in the Alabama Mentoring Program.

Participants

There were two groups of participants: nine elementary teachers and their nine elementary teacher mentors. The participating teachers were the total population of the 2007-2008 first-year elementary (K-6) teachers in the school system. They were based in three different elementary schools. The ages of the new teachers ranged from 21 to 38 years of age. There were eight females and one male, and all were Caucasian. None of them had ever taught in a classroom prior to participating in the mentoring program, except for their student-teaching experiences. Eight of the participants were hired immediately after graduating whereas one was hired one semester after graduating college. Of the nine, eight first-year teachers held a bachelor's degree, while one held a fifth-year program master's degree (alternative master's degree). All of the participants' majors were elementary education with K-6 certification.

The teacher mentors in the study each had one of the first-year teachers as a mentee. The age of the teacher mentors ranged from 28 to 51 years of age. There were nine females, all Caucasian. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 6 years to more than 25 years. All of the mentors held masters' degrees and three had educational specialists' degrees.

All the mentors had been involved in a 2-day professional development seminar focusing on the mentoring process. The seminars were conducted during the school day with classroom substitute teachers provided by the school district. The Human Resource Director conducted the seminars. During the seminars the mentors were given a large notebook filled with forms for observations, mentoring articles from professional journals, a mentoring log for recording time spent with their mentees, and journal pages for writing reflections.

The seminars were intended to develop mentoring skills in such areas as classroom observations, conferencing, and reflective questioning. In addition to these district-wide seminars, the Human Resource Director was also available to provide schools and individual mentors with school-site assistance upon the request of the principal or the mentor teachers. After the completion of the school year, the mentors received a stipend of \$1000.00.

In this school district, each mentor was selected by their school principals. The Human Resource Director explained the selection process to the principals. The principals selected the mentees based on certain criteria. First, the teacher mentors had to have at least 3 years successful teaching. The teacher mentors had to also demonstrate effectiveness in classroom instruction via provision of such evidence as (a) student achievement growth including standardized test scores; (b) portfolio of student work documenting evidence of student learning; and (c) documentation of effective teaching, using the results of PEPE observations by the principals.

In addition, the teacher mentors had to demonstrate excellence in communicating and collaborating with colleagues. The teacher mentors had to provide recommendations from a minimum of two colleagues attesting to their ability to work collaboratively toward professional growth and improvement goals.

Once the principals examined the eligible candidates from their faculty, they contacted the mentors whom they believed would be the best candidates. Two of the principals in this study matched the mentees with the same grade mentor. However, gender was not part of the criteria selection.

The need for the program was based on research. The program was designed to reduce teacher attrition, reduce recruitment and retention costs, and increase student achievement.

The State Department mandated that all teacher mentors for each new teacher had to be in place by October 1 of each school year. The school system began the new school year on August 11, 2008. Thus, mentors did not actually work with their mentees until the 8th week of school.

Design of the Study

In the spring of 2009, *the First-Year Teacher Survey* was administered to all of the first-year teachers in the study. In addition, focus group interviews were conducted with the participants. Because the teachers and their mentors were a large group, they were divided into four separate groups for the interviews. There were two focus groups of teachers and two focus groups of mentors.

Focus group interviews can be effective when assisting teachers in comparing their own ideas and others' ideas about teaching. In a true interview, characterized by openness, equality, and freedom, participants state their opinions and respond to numerous points of view with the purpose of increasing their knowledge about an issue. Focusing interviews around the participants' experiential knowledge is an effective means for developing participation, establishing enjoyable learning experiences, and helping teachers find answers to the problems they encounter (Wade, 1994).

The benefit of focus groups is to identify and focus on an issue or problem. Hence establishing a clear understanding of what information is being sought is critical to success (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Another advantage of using focus groups is that they are a highly effective technique for gathering information from a small group of people rather than from a large group. In addition, focus groups offer flexibility in how data are captured and may improve quality control in the data collection. The latter is possible because participants tend to focus

better in a group setting. According to Berg (1998), focus groups also have an advantage over individual interviews: “A far larger number of ideas, issues, and topics, and even solutions to a problem can be generated through group discussions than through individual conversations” (p. 101).

The disadvantages of focus groups include the fact that they are heavily dependent on how well they are facilitated and the fact the group data may not be generalizable to the larger population (Babbie, 1995; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990; Wimmer & Dominick, 1987). Furthermore, members of focus groups may be reluctant to speak due to group dynamics. Should this occur, the data analyzed could be biased or influenced by dominant members of the group. Wimmer and Dominick (1987) established that many negative aspects of focus groups can be transformed into positives by a well-informed and critical researcher. Many of the negatives can be circumvented by a researcher who understands the culture of the organization and the synergies that may exist among participants (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Therefore, the success of the focus group depends on taking appropriate steps to ensure proper design. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) stated that there are seven basic steps in focus group design and research: (a) problem/definition of the research question, (b) identification of the sampling, (c) identification of the moderator, (d) generation and pretesting of interview questions, (e) recruiting the sample, (f) conducting the group analysis and interpretation of data, and (g) writing the report. Implementing a focus group will provide a more structured process and support better attention to the details that are important for qualitative studies.

This qualitative research focuses on the participants’ perspectives. It allows the researcher to collect and analyze data, and requires the researcher to examine behavior in its normal setting. It also allows the researcher to form categories for inductive reasoning, and

permits the researcher to express findings through descriptive words (Merriam, 1998). Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) wrote that descriptive research relies on straightforward forms of measurement and simple, descriptive statistics, which can be used to identify meaningful patterns of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in groups of various sizes.

The importance of a research study may be measured in terms of its validity and reliability. Three sources for increasing the validity of qualitative studies are recommended by Yin (1994). First, the researcher should record the phenomenon through a variety of evidence, as using multiple sources of information results in a more considerable and precise study. Numerous sources of evidence effectively provide many measures of the same phenomenon. In order to triangulate the data, several sources were used in this study. These included a survey and first-year teachers' and mentors' interviews (Patton, 2002).

Second, the researcher should introduce a sequence of evidence to support the findings of the study (Yin, 1994). In this study, the findings were supported by the reference of particular data examples from the mentor interviews, mentee interviews, and surveys.

Third, the researcher should let the participants aid in supporting the facts and evidence presented (Yin, 1994). In this study, the researcher asked the participants to review the transcriptions to confirm precision and comprehensiveness. The researcher allowed the participants to make any revisions to the transcriptions. This process is called "member checking," which can confirm the reliability and credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Sources

First-year Teacher Survey

A survey concerning the mentoring program was administered to the nine first-year teachers. The first-year teacher participants were asked to respond to the First-Year Teacher

Survey (Appendix B). It contained a 5-point Likert-type scale with 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *No Opinion*, 4 = *Agree*, and 5 = *Strongly Agree*. The survey instrument included the level of support the novice teacher received from his or her mentor in the areas of instructional support, professional support, and personal support. The instrument was originally developed by Tony Thacker from the Alabama State Department of Education and called the Novice Teacher Survey. The title of the survey was changed to be more reflective of the population for this study.

Tony Thacker is an Education Administrator with the Alabama State Department of Education. He is currently the Project Administrator for the Governor's Commission on Quality Teaching. The Commission is charged with the task of updating and improving all phases of the teaching profession in the state of Alabama. Prior to his current position, Thacker was responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Alabama Leadership Academy, the leadership training arm of the Alabama Department of Education. There he developed the *Novice Teacher Survey* for the *Alabama Teacher Mentoring Program*. Thacker's main goal for the survey was to receive input from beginning teachers in the state of Alabama to improve the Alabama Teacher Mentor Program, but no initial pilot testing was conducted. However, in an e-mail from Thacker, he stated,

I have to immediately admit that we did not do a great deal of reliability or validity testing on these surveys. We essentially wanted to get input that could be used to improve the program. However, the results that we received from our surveys correlated quite well with the Take20 Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey. (Thacker, personal communication, 2008)

Construct Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which an observed measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept in consideration (Nunnally, 1978). To establish validity for this study, all

questions were based on the review of literature (see Appendix C), thus giving the survey construct validity.

In the spring of 2008, the survey was administered to five novice teachers from another school system. The teachers were previously in the Alabama Mentoring Program. Based on their recommendations, one question was eliminated from the survey because there were two questions that had the exact wording. Therefore, the survey went from 30 to 29 questions.

Focus Group Interviews

The researcher conducted four focus group interview sessions at different predetermined dates and times. Two different sets of interview questions were asked of the first-year teachers (Appendix C) and their mentors (Appendix D).

The researcher developed interview protocols by using an exhaustive search of the literature and using experts in the field of teacher mentoring and mentor programs. All interview protocols were submitted to university faculty members and former first-year teachers and mentors who previously participated in the mandated mentoring program. The teachers read the questions and based on their comments, necessary revisions were made and then used in the study.

Each of the standardized focus-group interviews lasted approximately 1 hour. Interviews were recorded using audio recorders and transcriptions were done. Data were then categorized to determine information provided by the participants.

With this interview approach, sets of questions were carefully worded and arranged. The intention was to ask each of the participants the same questions utilizing the same words. In a focus group, participants got to hear each other's responses and make additional comments as they heard what others in the group had to say (Patton, 2002).

Member Checking

In member checking, when participants affirm the accuracy and completeness, then the study is said to have had credibility. Member checks are not without fault, but serve to decrease the incidence of incorrect data and the incorrect interpretation of data. The overall goal of this process was to provide findings that are authentic and original (Lincoln & Gubba, 1985). To increase the credibility, member checking was completed at the end of the study. The researcher shared all the findings with all the participants involved in the study. The participants analyzed the findings from the interviews and then made additional comments. The participants affirmed that the interviews reflected their views and feelings.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the survey. Results were presented by percentages. Focus group interviews were used to collect qualitative data. After the interviews were conducted the interviews were transcribed. Then, the researcher read through the two focus group interviews for the mentees to determine the threads. Next, the researcher looked for the commonalities between the two interviews. As the themes started to emerge, the researcher highlighted in a specific color that particular theme. The same procedure was followed for the mentor interviews. Finally, the four interviews were combined to find the recurring themes for the combinations of mentees and mentors (Shank, 2002).

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of first-year teachers and their mentors regarding their school system's mandated mentoring program. This study also examined the perceived effects of the program. Chapter 4 presents data from four focus groups and the results of the *First Year Teacher Survey*. The survey was administered to the nine mentees and their mentors. Reports of the data resulted from both a qualitative and a quantitative perspective, with regard to first-year teachers' and their mentors' perceptions of their school system's mandated mentoring program.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 investigated the perceptions of first-year teachers regarding their school system's mandated mentoring program. In order to answer question 1, the *First-Year Teacher Survey* was administered to nine first-year teachers. The first-year teachers' data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics and are presented in percentages (Table 1). In addition, four focus groups were held with the first-year teachers and their mentors to gather additional information concerning their perceptions of the mentoring program. Table 1 shows the results of the survey analysis.

Table 1

Results of Analysis of the First-year Teacher Survey

Statement	% of respondents				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. My mentor provided support in planning instructional lessons.	78	22	0	0	0
2. My mentor provided an explanation of school and district policies.	22	56	22	0	0
3. My mentor expressed an awareness of my feelings and provided support through encouragement.	100	0	0	0	0
4. My mentor provided support in classroom management techniques.	56	44	0	0	0
5. My mentor provided tips on conducting parent/teacher conferences.	11	56	33	0	0
6. My mentor made time for me.	22	56	22	0	0
7. My mentor provided support in time management skills.	11	67	22	0	0
8. My mentor provided tips on how to work effectively with administrative staff.	22	56	22	0	0
9. My mentor was approachable.	78	22	0	0	0
10. My mentor shared current research on effective teaching strategies.	22	56	11	11	0
11. My mentor was dependable.	44	33	22	0	0
12. My mentor provided me with supportive feedback on lessons taught.	0	67	33	0	0
13. My mentor provided support in setting professional goals.	0	56	44	0	0
14. My mentor supported me in appropriate ways without smothering, parenting, or taking charge.	78	11	11	0	0
15. My mentor provided support in developing competencies required on the PEPE observation.	11	56	33	0	0
16. My mentor provided opportunities for me to examine best practices through book studies.	0	11	89	0	0
17. My mentor listened attentively.	67	22	11	0	0
18. My mentor provided suggestions for dealing with discipline problems.	33	33	33	0	0
19. My mentor provided support with grading procedures.	22	56	22	0	0
20. My mentor increased my confidence.	33	56	11	0	0
21. My mentor observed me teaching.	11	56	33	0	0
22. My mentor provided support with record keeping.	0	78	22	0	0
23. My mentor was trustworthy.	89	11	0	0	0
24. My mentor helped me to establish classroom routines.	78	22	0	0	0
25. My mentor exhibited a strong commitment to the teaching profession.	11	56	33	0	0
26. My mentor empowered me to self assess through reflection.	56	33	11	0	0
27. My mentor provided assistance in gathering curriculum materials to plan for instruction.	56	33	11	0	0
28. My mentor demonstrated a commitment to lifelong learning through professional development.	67	22	11	0	0
29. My mentor provided emotional support when things were difficult.	67	33	0	0	0

Note. 1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = No Opinion; 4 = Disagree; 5 = Strong Disagree

The analysis indicated that the participants all *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with all but one of the items on the survey. The items were all written positively so that agreement with an item indicated a positive perception. The only item without a majority of agreement was item 16. While 11% (one mentee) agreed that him/her mentor had provided opportunities for him/her to examine best practices through book studies, the rest had no opinion.

As a follow-up, the interviewer asked several of the mentees about their response to item 16. The mentees indicated that many resource books were recommended, but there were no book studies. When asked, they stated that they were not sure exactly what the question was asking.

Survey item 3 was the only item with which 100% of the participants *strongly agreed*. They thought their mentors were aware of their feelings and provided them support through encouragement. Survey item 23 indicated that 89% of the first-year teachers strongly agreed that their mentor was trustworthy.

Survey item 10 was the only item that indicated any negative responses. However, only one participant indicated this. This participant indicated that his/her mentor did not share research on effective teaching strategies. Overall, the mentees had a positive perception toward their mentoring program as indicated by the results of the survey.

When the focus group data for the mentees were analyzed and coded, two themes emerged. These themes were helpfulness and comradeship.

Helpfulness

On one part of the survey, all first-year teachers *strongly agreed* that their mentors provided support and encouragement. Other questions from the survey showed that all of the mentees agreed that their mentors provided support in planning instructional lessons, provided support in classroom management techniques, and helped establish classroom routines.

However, one mentee's interview added a caveat to the survey results. The mentee stated,

My mentor was very helpful in assisting me. But, there were some times in the afternoons when I needed something, but she was already gone. If so, we would talk the next day. But, when you have that question on your brain, it would be helpful, if they were there that afternoon.

The majority of the mentees indicated their mentor was very helpful, helping them with daily tasks such as grading tests and lesson planning. Several of the mentees expressed that their mentor provided valuable assistance in planning and record keeping. One mentee responded, "It was great to have someone who could show you how to do attendance on the computer or the grading system. From the little stuff to the big stuff, it helped out a lot."

However, one mentee indicated that she thought her mentor was not very helpful after school hours. She expressed how the mentor never stayed past 3:15 every day:

They [principal and mentor] would leave every day at 3:15 and I would have questions at 4 o'clock. I mean, were they helping me as much as they are supposed to be? Were they in it for the money? If the administration was more involved with it, they would have known those things without you having to go and say, you know, I have a problem with this because I don't really know what's going on. But I never was asked for any feedback on the program except for the survey. Of course, I wasn't going to say, hey, wait a second, I think she's leaving a little too early and I have questions to ask her.

The importance of seeking help from someone other than an administrator also was evident in the remarks of some mentees: "I felt less pressure when I did not have to ask my principal how to do something. You know, he might think I'm inadequate and should know those little things. I'm glad I had help from my mentor." Other mentees echoed that sentiment and stated that their mentor encouraged them to ask questions. One mentee said, "There was always encouragement. My mentor was always there to pick me up even if I felt I had a horrible lesson. She would help me figure out how to do it better the next time around." Another mentee stated, "The mentor that was assigned to me was awesome. She was always willing to help. She made it clear that I could go to her at anytime. She was there supporting me when I needed anything."

One mentee responded, “My mentor provided great help. We would meet right after my observation. She would say, you did great or maybe you might want to work on this. It was very constructive criticism. It really helped a lot.”

Almost all of the mentees thought that their mentor provided just enough support. Several mentees believed that their mentor helped them deal with parental problems and classroom management issues. For example, one mentee remarked,

My mentor helped me with parental involvement by helping at the beginning of the school year when I had no clue of exactly how I was supposed to start with the Open House and things like that, getting my parent letters ready to go home, what all I needed to let the parents know about at the beginning of school and how to come into contact with the parents for the first time and keep in contact with them throughout the year. And also with classroom management and discipline charts, she helped me to come up with ways to keep the parents involved with the child’s behavior throughout the day and throughout the week of school. If I had problems with behavior I could go to the mentor and let her know how I have handled the problem and get feedback from her on what she thought I could have done differently or if she thought I was on the right track or should I refer that problem to someone else.

Some of the first-year teachers agreed that their mentors were very helpful, but not overbearing. However, one teacher believed that her mentor was a bit over zealous:

My mentor wanted me to follow her schedule to the ‘t.’ She was very, very, very helpful, to say the least. We met after school on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. She would come in and observe me every Tuesday and Thursday. We also met during my planning period on Mondays and Fridays. We definitely had plenty of time together and met way beyond the suggested amount. Don’t get me wrong, I appreciated it, but it was just a little too much. I needed time to just copy stuff!

Comradeship

Although there were no items on the survey directly related to comradeship, this emerged as one of the themes from the interviews. All of the mentees expressed their mentor was approachable, trustworthy, and provided emotional support. Some of the mentees believed they connected to their mentors in ways that were deeper than just mentor to mentee. Several of the mentees used the word “friend” or “friendship” in describing interaction with their mentor.

Others used the word “trust” or “trustworthy.” One mentee stated that she and her mentor actually spent time together outside of school. “We still to this day go out to eat and shop together. She is only 7 years older than I am. She and I just bonded and became lasting friends.”

Another mentee added, “My mentor is a true friend, one that you can trust and tell anything to. We also have formed a lasting friendship.” Others indicated they knew their mentor was always available if they needed emotional support. One mentee stated, “If I had a meltdown, she was there to hold my hand and encourage me to keep my chin up.”

One mentee’s perceptions of how mentoring contributed to a feeling of acceptance reflected ideas echoed by others as well.

I think having a mentor is extremely important. She respected me and made me feel a part of the school. That was important because she was respected by her peers and if she liked me, they liked me. She treated me as an equal. She was my friend.

Several mentees indicated that being in a new environment can be scary for a new teacher. Others indicated that they felt somewhat intimidated to be around new people.

One mentee stated,

It’s intimidating when you’re a new teacher coming in and you don’t have anyone. You’re kind of like all alone and you’ve got 16 kids looking at you and you’re like, I don’t know, I’m scared. It was good to have a friend to be there.

Another mentee added,

My mentor definitely became my friend. I could talk to her about anything, go to her anytime. It was really great to have somebody to support you and say, yes, you did the right thing. She gave me encouragement and helped me to acclimate to a new setting.

However, not all the relationships were close ones. One particular mentee replied, “I didn’t want a buddy, I just wanted a mentor. I think she had way too much time on her hands.” A second mentee suggested that the reason he and his mentee did not bond was because of gender

and age. “She was nice and all, but we didn’t bond like they all are talking about. My mentor was an older lady that I personally had nothing in common with on that kind of level.”

While the majority of the mentees expressed an appreciation for friendship with their mentors, one mentor, during the interview with a mentor focus group, stated a concern.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 investigated the perceptions of mentors regarding their school system’s mandated mentoring program. In order to answer the question, two focus group interviews were held with the mentors, four in one group, five in another group.

Overall, the mentors had a positive perception of the mentoring program. Three themes emerged from the mentor focus group interviews: (a) support, (b) paperwork, and (c) proximity.

Support

The themes of support emerged on two fronts: support from the school district and support the mentors perceived that they gave to the mentees. The first theme revealed from the mentor focus groups was the amount of support their school system provided them. The mentors believed the school system prepared them to help their mentees with instructional planning and classroom management issues due to the training workshops that were provided once they became a mentor. The mentors also reported that their school system provided them with numerous materials that could be used to help their mentees.

According to one mentor,

The mentor coordinator gave us lots of materials to take and use with our mentees. We did training on *Reading Street Curriculum* and teaching to fidelity. We also used several things to help with classroom management. I think we knew the focus should first be on classroom management because if you don’t have that in place, then nothing else is effective.

In addition to support from the system, mentors believed they were supporting the mentees as well. Mentors revealed that weekly meetings with their mentees were spent on looking at curriculum, helping establish routines, classroom management, and helping communicate with parents.

I spent a lot of time going over the courses of study and DIBELS progress monitoring with my mentee. We worked on developing portfolios in order to collect data on their students' progress. Also it was important to communicate with my mentee how to communicate with parents. Making contact with them and learning how to talk to them in a calm and accepting manner, especially at my school which is somewhat diverse.

The majority of the mentors noted that the training from the school system was very effective. The objectives of the program were well established and the majority of the goals were met. One mentor stated, "I'm glad the system had the meetings before we began working with our mentees. They told us exactly what to do to help our mentee."

Another mentor stated: "We got lots of information from the central office. I like the notebooks they gave us. It helped to keep me organized. It was a lot of work, but I enjoyed it."

All of the mentors thought they helped the mentees communicate with parents. However, based on the survey, not all of the mentees believed their mentor provided tips on parent teacher conferences. Although some mentees believed their mentors did not provide tips for parent conferences, they believed their mentor discussed other aspects of dealing with parents:

My mentor gave me student books to send home for my parents to read to their children. She also helped me type up my weekly newsletters to send home, but she didn't really discuss how to deal with the parents. For example, how to deal with an irate parent, or telling them their child needed to be retained or tested for special education evaluation, but my counselor and principal helped me with those things.

Paperwork

The second theme that emerged from the mentor's interviews was the amount of paperwork that was required of them as a mentor. Almost all of the mentors shared concerns that the school system required too much paperwork. One mentor exclaimed,

The paperwork was just overwhelming. You had to make sure you had this schedule and that schedule written down and plus what the other two mentors said, the walking in and observing your mentee on a regular basis. It was definitely a problem.

Another mentor added: "Basically, every day we had to keep a log of everything we do. We had to document that we met with them. We had to sign off and they had to sign off. You definitely need to be organized."

A third mentor expressed her sentiments by saying,

The program requires a lot. I felt like I was constantly having to fill out some kind of form, keep up with a log, or meet with the mentee. Sometimes, it was difficult. I really enjoyed it, but it was difficult.

Many of mentors stated there was not enough time to complete all of the paperwork. One mentor replied, "I understand the documentation, but since I missed my planning, I would end up having to finish at home. It wasn't difficult, just time-consuming."

Another stated, "I agree with the others, there was a lot of paperwork, but I did enjoy having the experience of being a mentor."

Several of the mentors from one school stated that they believed their administrator could have helped by providing more time to work on paperwork and, in turn, providing more time for mentoring.

One mentor suggested,

We needed to be able to have a lot more time to be able to work on the paperwork that the program mandated for us to do. I think administration should have provided us with an extra planning. It would have been good to have someone else like a reading coach

come in and watch my class maybe once a week. That would have been easier for us. The biggest issue was meeting with my teacher and trying to get in all the paperwork.

Several mentors expressed that they would reconsider before becoming a mentor again because of the amount of paperwork that was required of them. Two mentors indicated that being monetarily compensated would not make a difference. One of the mentors stated,

What is really unfortunate is that I would have to think hard before I decided to become a mentor again. I agree with everyone, to do everything correctly, it takes a lot time to get it turned in to them. As I said, I would have to really think about it, even receiving the stipend.

Another mentor added, “It’s not about the money, it’s about making a difference, but I agree, it’s more than I expected.”

Proximity

The third theme that emerged from the mentor interviews was proximity. Proximity is defined as teaching in the same building, teaching the same content, teaching the same grade level as their mentee.

For this study, there were two groups of participants: nine elementary teachers and their nine elementary teacher mentors. Each of the teachers had a mentor who taught at the same school and was on the same campus. Five teachers were in the same building as their mentors. Seven of the mentors taught the same grade as their mentee. Two mentors taught at different grade levels than their mentees.

All of the mentors found it important for their mentees to teach on the same grade level and be in the same building. They also agreed that proximity allowed them the ability to meet consistently, but, more importantly, teaching the same grade provided increased opportunity to plan around the same content. One mentor stated, “Having a mentee that taught the same grade as I, was definitely a plus. It was a lot easier to meet every day since we shared the same

schedule. I was able to open my door and he was there.” Another mentor replied, “I also got to see my mentee daily. We met several times a week to do some deep planning. Being in the same building, teaching the same grade allowed us to plan every day.” A third mentor stated,

I agree, it was easier for me since she was just around the corner. We were able to see each other during our planning, at lunch, and after school. It also made it easier for me to go in and observe her often. I found that to be very helpful.

While all of the mentors and mentees were in the same school, not all of the mentors were in the same building or taught the same grade level as their mentees. Several mentors mentioned that it was difficult not being in the same building as their mentee. One mentor stated,

I wished that my mentee and I would have been in the same building. Since we didn’t have the same grade, we didn’t have planning time together. Therefore, we stayed after school many days.

Another mentor exclaimed,

Last year was a lot harder since my mentee taught a different grade than I. I’m glad my principal had enough confidence in me to let me do it. I felt as if I couldn’t share some of the simple things with her such as my lesson plans, materials for centers and class work. Maybe, it wasn’t as beneficial for her. I have always enjoyed being a mentor, but I want them to get the best out of the mentoring.

Another mentor suggested that it be required that the mentor and mentee be in the same building. It was also suggested that the mentor and mentee teach the same grade. She stated,

I think to get the most out of the mentoring program, the requirements should include the mentor and teacher in the same building and teaching the same thing. I believe the training we went through to become a mentor was quite intense. I would hate it for the program to fail because of not matching the right mentor with the new teacher.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 investigated the perceived effects of the school system’s mandated mentoring program. There were two themes that emerged from the mentees’ and mentors’ interviews. These themes were communication and program satisfaction.

Communication

Several of the mentees believed that their principals did not communicate with them about the program. Every mentee agreed that either the school system or an administrator should have informed them about the program. One mentee stated,

I think the administrator or someone over the program should have called a meeting with everybody that was involved, the mentors and the mentees for that school year and said, this is what I have decided to do and this is how they were selected.

At one school, two different mentees were not officially told who their mentors were until several months into the program. There were two mentors helping two mentees because all four of them were in the same grade and same building. However, this was the administrator's job to inform the mentees who were assigned as their mentors. Although the school district had that information and gave it to the administrator and mentors, the school administrator failed to inform the mentees. One of the mentees indicated,

Whenever I was given my mentor there was another first-year teacher that was given one at the same time. It was like we had a mentor, but we really didn't know who was our mentor. We knew those two ladies were our mentors at first and then it was like, well, which one is mine? I mean, they were both helping us. It took a little while for us to figure out which one belonged to which person because they never come up and said I am officially your mentor. It was like we were all working together. It was really weird; they both came in and observed both of us. There wasn't a formal introduction of administration saying that this is the person that you will be working with and this is why I chose them.

Another mentee added,

I think that maybe my administrator could have played a more active role in the program. I was basically introduced to, this is going to be your mentor for the year and that was it. Luckily, I had a wonderful mentor, but I knew very little about how she was selected or what I should expect and what she should expect of me. A little more information from principal would have been beneficial.

Another mentee stated,

I do not know how much communication took place between the mentor and the administration. If I could have gotten some feedback on what my principal thought. Or I

if my mentor was even relaying anything to him, so maybe have some sort of meeting with the principal for all mentors and mentees in their school. I don't know how many were at the school that I was being mentored. I did talk to my principal personally about certain situations that would arise because there would be some things my mentor would say, well, you need to go ask the principal about that and I would or let him know what's going on. So there were times when I did communicate with the administrator, but only if my mentor told me to.

While many of the mentees felt as if the school system and principal could have communicated better, all of the mentors thought their school system communicated with them frequently, especially the district program coordinator for the mentoring program. One mentor indicated, "The district program coordinator [Human Resource Director] was an excellent resource for providing support and communication. She was there any time that we needed her. I could go and ask for anything." Another mentor added, "The program coordinator [Human Resource Director] was very good about keeping us updated with e-mails and reminding [us] of what was due."

Several mentors also indicated that their principals regularly communicated with them. They also said their principals were willing to make time for them. One mentor stated, "My principal was always asking how it was going with my mentee. She asked what she could do to make it easier for me, and she even helped with scheduling observations." Another mentor replied, "Yes, our principal is always willing to go that extra mile to help us with anything. She did help us get the observations in."

While the majority of the mentors stated that their principal communicated regularly, one mentor said her principal was not very helpful. She stated, "He never asked anything, he just left it up to us. He said, here is the person that has been assigned to you, go to the professional development meetings and pretty much let the district coordinator handle it."

Program Satisfaction

The mentors and mentees appeared equally satisfied with the program. In addition, they valued the experience. One mentee summed it this way: “I would recommend the mentoring program just to know that you have one person dedicated to you that you could go to anytime. I learned a lot about teaching, curriculum, and how to deal with my students.”

Another mentee added,

I absolutely believe that this should continue. I could not imagine being a first-year teacher and trying to start the school year and not have one particular person to know that you could go to. You could definitely ask anyone around you, but it’s just nice knowing that one person who is set aside for any questions and give you help that you need.

A third mentee stated,

It has so many strengths to it. It is structured very well. Of course it could be tweaked, but overall it is a great program. It is nice to have one person that you can go to for consistency. They have been trained and I know they went through meetings throughout the school year too. So, you are getting someone that has been informed and trained before they help you.

Several mentors noted the benefits of the mentoring program. They suggested that a mentoring program would have helped them when they were new teachers. One mentor stated,

I think the program benefits new teachers when they come into our system. I wish they had it when I started teaching, but I was fortunate to have great teachers to help me without having a program, not all would be a fortunate as I was.

Another mentor said, “I agree, the program is very beneficial. Maybe more teachers would have had successful first years if they would have had a mentoring program available.”

A third mentor added, “The program can definitely help new teachers. I believe the longer the program exists, the better it can become. The school system can see what works and what does not work. It just takes time.”

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of first-year teachers and their mentors regarding their school system's mandated mentoring program. This study also examined the perceived effects of the program.

Three research questions were constructed to guide this study:

1. What are the perceptions of first-year teachers regarding their school system's mandated mentoring program?
2. What are the perceptions of first-year teacher mentors regarding their school system's mandated mentoring program?
3. What are the perceived effects of the school system's mandated mentoring program?

Findings and Conclusions

Mentees

Overall, the mentees agreed that their mentors were helpful and supportive. The mentees thought their mentors were helpful in many areas, including modeling lessons, grading tests, planning, gathering resources, curriculum, classroom management, and implementing new ideas. Several studies from the literature support this finding, stating that effective mentors help with their mentees with these tasks (Auton, Berry, Mullen, & Cochran, 2002; Denmark & Posden, 2000; Moir, 2000).

One of the findings showed that the mentees sought help from their mentors rather than their principals. The mentees felt more comfortable asking for assistance from their mentors. The

mentors made themselves available in a nonjudgmental way, whereas the mentees believed that their principals might see them as inept. The literature indicates that many beginning teachers find it difficult to seek help from their administrators (Miller & Fraser, 2000; Rieg et al., 2007). However, it is the professional responsibility of the school administrator to help provide support for all beginning teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

All of the mentees also agreed that their mentors were supportive. Specifically, they were emotionally supportive. The mentees believed they could ask for anything and their mentor would be there. They indicated that their mentors encouraged, listened, and wanted them to be successful. Furthermore, the mentees indicated that they gained more confidence after having a mentor.

Research has indicated that beginning teachers find it difficult to ask for support from their colleagues. However, when a particular mentor is assigned to a beginning teacher, it allows them to have someone with whom they can confide and collaborate. Providing that support is important, because it helps mentees understand that he or she is valued and that someone is there to listen and care (Brownell et al., 2008). Meyer (2002) indicated that having an effective mentor can reduce feelings of isolation, increase confidence, and encourage an exchange of dialogue on good teaching practices between novice teachers and more experienced educators.

Several studies have indicated that one of the important supports that a novice teacher should have is emotional support (Jonson, 2002; Miller & Fraser, 2000; Rieg et al., 2007; Whitaker, 2000). The emotional support of novice teachers is important for the development of healthier attitudes and perceptions of teaching. When emotional support is limited or not being provided, the new teacher can be expected to feel insecure and frustrated, and lack confidence (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Kilbug, 2002). However, if the novice teachers' emotional needs

are met, then they can easily cope with the stressors of teaching (Whitaker, 2000). Without these coping strategies, a first-year teacher's tactics for dealing with the stress of teaching could inevitably affect the instructional practices in the classroom (Johnson et al., 2001).

Edwards (2002) examined the perceptions of mentored first-year teachers. The results indicated that 75% of the participants said that having a mentor their first year impacted their decision to stay in teaching. The participants emphasized that the emotional support the mentor provided was one reason the mentees stayed in teaching.

In addition to being helpful, the mentors established comradeship with their mentees. Many of the mentees believed they connected to their mentors in ways that were deeper than just professionally. The mentors and mentees even spent time together outside of school.

The mentees saw their mentors as friends whom they could trust. From the survey, 89% of the mentees strongly agreed that their mentors were trustworthy. This could be due to the fact that they had established long-lasting friendships with their mentors. Furthermore, the mentees believed their friendship did not get in the way of the mentoring relationship. They believed that their mentors communicated and corrected them in areas that were needed.

Although the mentees perceived that they separated their personal and professional relationships, some of mentors perceived that the friendship got in the way and caused problems. Several mentors found it difficult to give constructive criticism because they were afraid it would affect the friendship they had established with their mentees.

While mentoring programs are meant to provide professional and personal assistance for the novice teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2001), in this study, the personal assistance seemed to interfere with the mentors, especially during observations.

Historically, in the original Greek model of mentoring, the mentor's role was that of an older, trusted and loyal friend, who responsible for the growth and development of the mentee. The relationship was highly personal and mutually respectful (Stammers,1992). According to Gold (1999), "mentoring is a relationship, where the mentee should personally and professionally benefit from the intervention" p.552.

Furthermore, Kajs (2002), found it to be essential for the mentors to provide their mentees with the opportunities and the skills to build their relationship and also provide the means by which they may become friends. However, Jones, Nettelton, and Smith (2005) indicated that personal relationships could interfere with the mentoring process and become potentially problematic in terms of conflicting loyalties.

Another finding was the mentees thought that an orientation would be useful. They wanted to be aware of the mentoring process and know what the objectives and goals were for the program. A study conducted by Warring and Lindquist (1999) indicated that a 4-day training session for mentees was conducted at various times throughout the school year. These trainings consisted of classroom management techniques, planning and conducting parent-teacher conferences, and incorporating community and district resources to enrich instruction and interpretation of test scores. Although the mentees received training, it was further recommended that the initial training be held before the start of school year to offer better support and so the mentee can met his/her mentor before school began. In this study, the State Department mandated that all teacher mentoring programs had to be in place by October 1 of each school year. However, the school system began the new school year on August 11, 2008. Consequently, mentors did not actually work with their mentees until the 8th week of school.

In conclusion, for this study the mentoring program appeared to be one that nurtured the new teachers. The mentees perceived that they were well-supported by their mentors and valued their friendship, but wished that they had more of an orientation to the mentoring process before commencing with the program.

Mentors

The mentors believed they provided their mentees with ongoing support that was needed in their day-to-day teaching. The mentors were a source of valuable information. The mentoring program provided the first-year teachers an experienced teacher with whom to exchange ideas and learn to be an effective classroom teacher. This finding is suggested by Johnson et al. (2001) and Brock and Grady (1997).

The specific areas that the mentors believed they helped their mentees with were instructional planning and classroom management issues. They thought the training that their school system provided helped them address these needs.

Stanulis (2002) found that expert mentors can help new teachers with specific needs such as curriculum and instructional planning. Additionally, effective mentors can help new teachers with classroom management and organizational skills (Bartell 2005). Hertzog (2002) investigated the problems of first-year teachers and recommended that these teachers be provided with a variety of resources such as mentoring programs and professional development in the area of classroom management.

The mentors believed their school system prepared them to help their mentees with instructional planning and classroom management issues. The mentors indicated that training workshops that were provided once they became a mentor were very valuable. Furthermore, the

mentors reported that their school system provided them with numerous materials that could be used to help their mentees.

One finding from the study indicated that the matching between mentee and mentor was an area of importance to both groups. It was indicated that there was a need to teach the same subject area or grade level as their counterpart so they could have the same similar lesson plans and preparation times. These findings support the review of literature related to the matching of mentees and mentors. Several studies have indicated that the mentor and mentee grade level matching must be highly considered to have a successful mentoring program (Cox, 2005; Kilburg, 2002, Kilburg, 2004).

A successful program allows the mentee to choose from a group of mentors or a mentor can choose from a group of mentees. Pairs can be matched according to expressed needs of mentors and mentee, but both the mentor and mentee need to be in agreement (Daloz, 1999; Hale, 2000). Additionally, it has been found that teachers who were mentored by a colleague at their same grade level showed greater job satisfaction, which led to lower attrition rates (Kardos, 2004; NCES,2002).

Another finding in the study was that the mentors believed too much paperwork was required of them. Many of the mentors expressed dislike for the forms they completed at the end of each month, commenting on the repetitive questions that made them feel like they were endlessly writing the same answers. Several of the mentors expressed frustration with vague and confusing wording on the forms as well. Other mentors went as far as to say that they would reconsider being a mentor because of the amount of paperwork required of them.

Childs (1997) found that the fact that there is too much paperwork and too long a process to mentor without pay causes some teachers to decline participation and others to seriously

consider leaving the mentor program. In a study conducted by the Delaware Department of Education (2007), the mentors stated that the amount of paperwork took away from other important aspects of the mentoring program. It was further recommended that paperwork be streamlined to lessen the amount given to the mentors. Childs also recommended that school systems streamline required paperwork to allow the teacher to focus on mentoring and not be bombarded by excessive forms.

An additional finding from the study was proximity. All of the mentors found it important for their mentees to teach on the same grade level and be in the same building. They also agreed that proximity allowed them the ability to meet consistently, but more importantly, teaching the same grade provided increased opportunity to plan around the same content. The mentors suggested that it be required that the mentor and mentee be in the same building. It was also suggested that the mentor and mentee teach the same grade.

In addressing Research Question 2, it appears that the mentors also valued the mentoring program. They perceived that they supported their mentees and found the program to be beneficial.

Effects of Program

The mentors and mentees believed there were no problems with communication among them. However, every mentee agreed that either the school system or an administrator should have informed them about the mentoring program. The mentees at one school thought that their principal did not communicate with them about the program. Two of the teachers from that school were not initially told who their mentors were. However, mentees from another school believed that their principal was actively involved in the mentoring process.

Research has indicated a crucial importance of regular communication between the mentor and the mentee. When there is a lack of communication, then the mentor's and mentee's relationship will not function (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Gilbert, 2005). Furthermore, when there is lack of administrative support in a mentoring program, new teachers are less likely to stay in the profession (Brewster & Railsback, 2001).

The results indicated that the mentors and mentees were equally satisfied with the program. In addition, they valued the experience. The mentees had positive relationships with their mentors and they found the mentoring activities helpful in their development as a beginning teacher. The mentees also indicated that they attributed their mentoring experience to developing professional relationships.

The mentors wished they had a mentoring program when they were new teachers. The mentees stated that it would have been difficult not having a mentoring program in place.

Additional Findings and Conclusions

After the study was concluded, the researcher examined the rate of new elementary teacher attrition in the school district for the last 5 years. Table 2 shows the results from the three schools in the study.

Table 2

Elementary Teacher Attrition Rate for First-year Teachers

	Years				
	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
School A	2	0	1	1	0
School B	0	0	0	0	0
School C	1	0	0	0	0

The table indicates that there were no elementary first-year teachers in the mentoring program who left the school system in 2005-2006 and 2008-2009 school years. However, in 2007-2008, the teacher from School A transferred to another school system. In addition, the researcher found that none of the first-year teachers in this study changed their school or grade level. All first-year teachers in this study remained in the same position for the next school year. Although the attribution rate in these schools has not been high in the past, possibly the mandated mentoring program contributed to the retention of all first-year teachers.

Implications

The findings of this study indicated that mentors and their mentees perceived that their school system's mandated mentoring program was beneficial and should continue. The following recommendations for mandated mentoring programs emerged from this study.

1. Mentoring programs should try to match mentees and mentors as much as possible.
2. Mentoring programs should carefully train and caution mentors with regard to establishing appropriate professional relationships with mentees.
3. Mentoring programs should provide professional development for mentees as well as mentors before the program begins.
4. Too much additional paperwork may cause teachers to drop out or not volunteer for mentoring programs. Mentoring programs should try to streamline the additional amount of paperwork required of mentoring teachers who are already dealing with a vast amount of school related paperwork.
5. Although the *Novice Teacher Survey* (which was state mandated) was administered to all mentees, there was no parallel instrument given to the mentors. Mentoring programs need to

ensure that all participants have the opportunity to evaluate and critique the program in a way that would not jeopardize their position.

Recommendations for Future Studies

This study sought to examine the perceptions of first-year teachers and their mentors regarding their school system's mandated mentoring program. This study also examined the perceived effects of the program.

Several recommendations were proposed for future studies. Future studies should be conducted using a larger sample of participants. More participants are needed to get a reliable picture of what is going on. It is also recommended that a study should be conducted using secondary teacher participants. It is possible that secondary mentoring participants could have different perceptions than elementary participants. Finally, future studies should be conducted from an administrative perspective.

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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

I. Identifying information

	Principal Investigator	Second Investigator	Third Investigator
Name:	Leann Smith		
Department:	Curriculum and Instruction		
College:	College of Education		
University:	University of Alabama		
Address:	799 Commercial Street Hanceville, Al 35031		
Telephone:	256-352-9196		
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E-mail:	lsmith@ccboe.org		

Title of Research Project: Teachers' and mentors' perceptions of a system-wide mandated mentoring program for first-year teachers

Date Printed:	Funding Source:
Type of Proposal:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Revision <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Exempt
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin: 5px auto; width: fit-content;"> Attach a renewal application </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin: 5px auto; width: fit-content;"> Attach a continuing review of studies form </div> <p align="center">Please enter the original IRB # at the top of the page</p>

UA faculty or staff member signature: _____

II. NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION (to be completed by IRB):

Type of Review: Full board Expedited

IRB Action:

<input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Tabled Pending Revisions	Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved Pending Revisions	Date: _____

Approved—this proposal complies with University and federal regulations for the protection of human subjects.

Approval is effective until the following date:

Items approved:	<input type="checkbox"/> Research protocol:	dated
	<input type="checkbox"/> Informed consent:	dated
	<input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment materials:	dated
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	dated

Approval signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B
NOVICE TEACHER SURVEY

Novice Teacher Survey

Your participation is greatly appreciated

The purpose of this survey is to measure perceptions of the Teacher Mentor Program in the school system by mentors and novice teachers. Below you will find statements related to the level of support you received from your mentor in the areas of instructional support, professional support, and personal support. Use the scale provided to indicate the level of support you received from you mentor. Please respond to all statements by circling one number to the right of the statement. All responses will remain confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

Strongly Agree **Agree** **No Opinion** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**
1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

Statement	Rate				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. My mentor provided support in planning instructional lessons.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My mentor provided an explanation of school and district policies.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My mentor expressed an awareness of my feelings and provided support through encouragement.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My mentor provided support in classroom management techniques.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My mentor provided tips on conducting parent/teacher conferences.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My mentor made time for me.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My mentor provided support in time management skills.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My mentor provided tips on how to work effectively with administrative staff.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My mentor was approachable.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My mentor shared current research on effective teaching strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My mentor was dependable.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My mentor provided me with supportive feedback on lessons taught.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My mentor provided support in setting professional goals.	1	2	3	4	5
14. My mentor supported me in appropriate ways without smothering, parenting, or taking charge.	1	2	3	4	5
15. My mentor provided support in developing competencies required on the PEPE observation.	1	2	3	4	5
16. My mentor provided opportunities for me to examine best practices through book studies.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My mentor listened attentively.	1	2	3	4	5

(table continues)

Statement	Rate				
	1	2	3	4	5
18. My mentor provided suggestions for dealing with discipline problems.	1	2	3	4	5
19. My mentor provided support with grading procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
20. My mentor increased my confidence.	1	2	3	4	5
21. My mentor observed me teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
22. My mentor provided support with record keeping.	1	2	3	4	5
23. My mentor was trustworthy.	1	2	3	4	5
24. My mentor helped me to establish classroom routines.	1	2	3	4	5
25. My mentor exhibited a strong commitment to the teaching profession.	1	2	3	4	5
26. My mentor empowered me to self assess through reflection.	1	2	3	4	5
27. My mentor provided assistance in gathering curriculum materials to plan for instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
28. My mentor demonstrated a commitment to lifelong learning through professional development.	1	2	3	4	5
29. My mentor provided emotional support when things were difficult.	1	2	3	4	5

30. What grade level were you teaching when you were in the mentoring program?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kindergarten | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 th Grade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 st Grade | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 th Grade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 nd Grade | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 th Grade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 rd Grade | |

31. Circle the highest degree you hold:

- Bachelors Masters Educational Specialist Doctorate**

32. On average, how often did you meet with your mentor?

- less than an hour per week
 1- 2 ½ hours per week
 3-5 hours per week
 more than 5 hours per week
 Other (specify)

APPENDIX C
MENTEE TEACHERS

Mentee Teachers

1. What are some of the greatest challenges you faced as a first-year teacher?
2. How did your mentor help you with these challenges?
3. What do you see as the strengths of having a mentor?
4. Describe how much support and communication your mentor provided to you.
5. How could your mentor have better assisted you?
6. What aspects of the mentoring program have given you the most concern?
7. What could your school administrator have done to better assist you?
8. How did your mentor provide help with any problems you encountered when teaching children with disabilities or who did not speak English?
9. How did your mentor provide help with any discipline or classroom management problems?
10. Would you recommend this mentoring program to continue? Why or why not?
11. What else would you like to add about any aspect of the district's mentoring program?

APPENDIX D
TEACHER MENTORS

Teacher Mentors

1. What were some of the greatest challenges faced by your mentee teacher?
2. How did you help your mentee with these challenges?
3. What do you see as the strengths of new teachers having a mentor?
4. Describe the support and the communication you gave your mentee teacher.
5. How might you have assisted the mentee better?
6. What aspects of the mentoring program have given you the most concern?
7. What could your school administrator have done to better assist you and your mentee?
8. How did you provide help to the mentee when he/she encountered problems teaching children with disabilities or who did not speak English?
9. How did you provide help to your mentee with any discipline or classroom management problems?
10. Would you recommend this mentoring program to continue? Why or why not?
11. What else would you like to add about any aspect of the district's mentoring program?

APPENDIX E

CONSTRUCT VALIDITY FOR
FIRST-YEAR TEACHER SURVEY

First-Year Teacher Survey

1. My mentor provided support in planning instructional lessons. (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Gratch, 2001; Lindgren, 2005)
2. My mentor provided an explanation of school and district policies. (Britton, 2003; Mills, Moore & Keane, 2001; Whitaker, 2000).
3. My mentor expressed an awareness of my feelings and provided support through encouragement. (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Algorzine et.al, 2007)
4. My mentor provided support in classroom management techniques. (Hertzog, 2002; Rydell & Henricsson, 2004; Stanulius, 2002)
5. My mentor provided tips on conducting parent/teacher conferences. Gee, 2001; Gratch, 2001; U.S. Dept. of Ed., 2005; Wilson & Ireton, 1997)
6. My mentor made time for me. (Ganser, 2004; Mills, Moore, Keane, 2001; National Foundation for Improvement of Ed., 1999)
7. My mentor provided support in time management skills. (Archer, 2003; Campbell & Campbell, 2000; Johnson, 2001; Wong, 2004)
8. My mentor provided tips on how to work effectively with administrative staff. (Glickman, Gordon, Ross-Gordon, 2001; Kronowith, 1999)
9. My mentor was approachable. (Cox, 2005; Daloz, 1999; Hale, 2000)
10. My mentor shared current research on effective teaching strategies. (Gray & Behan, 2005; Youngs, 2003)
11. My mentor was dependable. (Cox, 2005; Daloz, 1999; Hale, 2000)
12. My mentor provided me with supportive feedback on lessons taught. (Ballaytne & Halford, 1995; Schmidt, 2005)
13. My mentor provided support in setting professional goals. (Ballantyne & Hansford, 1995; Brooks & Sikes, 1997; McGee, 2001)
14. My mentor supported me in appropriate ways without smothering, parenting, or taking charge. (Serpell & Bozeman, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004)
15. My mentor provided support in developing competencies required on the PEPE observation. (Alabama's Best Practice Center, 2001; Alabama State Department of Education, 2005)
16. My mentor provided support in developing competencies required on the PEPE evaluation. (Alabama Best Practice Center, 2001; Alabama State Department of Education, 2005)
17. My mentor listened attentively. (Brownell, Murdock, & Walker, 2008; Ganser, 2002; Haack, 2006; Villani, 2002)
18. My mentor provided suggestions for dealing with discipline problems. (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Whitaker, 2000)
19. My mentor provided support with grading procedures. (Balantyne & Hansford, 1995; Fletcher & Barrett, 2004)
20. My mentor increased my confidence. (Ganser, 2002; Haack, 2006; Stanulius, 2002)
21. My mentor observed me teaching. (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Gilbert, 2005; Villani, 2002)

22. My mentor provided support with record keeping. (Ballantyne & Hansford, 1995; Fletcher& Barrett, 2004; Moughton & Gay, 1998)
23. My mentor was trustworthy. (Conyers, 2004; Serpell & Bozeman, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004)
24. My mentor helped me to establish classroom routines. (Allen et al., 1997; Odell, 1989)
25. My mentor exhibited a strong commitment to the teaching profession. (Ganser, 2002; Kajs, 2002)
26. My mentor empowered me to self assess through reflection. (Ballantyne & Hansford, 1995; Lucas, 2001; Mullen & Kealy. 1999)
27. My mentor provided assistance in gathering curriculum materials to plan for instruction. (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Odell, 1989)
28. My mentor demonstrated a commitment to lifelong learning through professional development. (Alred & Garvey, 2000; Brooks & Sikes, 1997; Vonk, 1995)
29. My mentor provided emotional support when things were difficult. (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Meyer, 2002; Whitaker, 2000)

APPENDIX F
SURVEY RESPONSES

Strongly Agree
1

Agree
2

No Opinion
3

Disagree
4

Strongly Disagree
5

Statement	Rate				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. My mentor provided support in planning instructional lessons.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My mentor provided an explanation of school and district policies.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My mentor expressed an awareness of my feelings and provided support through encouragement.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My mentor provided support in classroom management techniques.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My mentor provided tips on conducting parent/teacher conferences.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My mentor made time for me.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My mentor provided support in time management skills.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My mentor provided tips on how to work effectively with administrative staff.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My mentor was approachable.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My mentor shared current research on effective teaching strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My mentor was dependable.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My mentor provided me with supportive feedback on lessons taught.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My mentor provided support in setting professional goals.	1	2	3	4	5
14. My mentor supported me in appropriate ways without smothering, parenting, or taking charge.	1	2	3	4	5
15. My mentor provided support in developing competencies required on the PEPE observation.	1	2	3	4	5
16. My mentor provided opportunities for me to examine best practices through book studies.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My mentor listened attentively.	1	2	3	4	5
18. My mentor provided suggestions for dealing with discipline problems.	1	2	3	4	5
19. My mentor provided support with grading procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
20. My mentor increased my confidence.	1	2	3	4	5
21. My mentor observed me teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
22. My mentor provided support with record keeping.	1	2	3	4	5
23. My mentor was trustworthy.	1	2	3	4	5
24. My mentor helped me to establish classroom routines.	1	2	3	4	5
25. My mentor exhibited a strong commitment to the teaching profession.	1	2	3	4	5
26. My mentor empowered me to self assess through reflection.	1	2	3	4	5
27. My mentor provided assistance in gathering curriculum materials to plan for instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
28. My mentor demonstrated a commitment to lifelong learning through professional development.	1	2	3	4	5
29. My mentor provided emotional support when things were difficult.	1	2	3	4	5