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The Influence of Mentorship on K-5 General Education Teachers: A Study of Southeastern Schools in Virginia

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THE INFLUENCE OF MENTORSHIP ON K-5 GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS: A STUDY OF SOUTHEASTERN SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA

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ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF MENTORSHIP ON K-5 GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS: A STUDY OF SOUTHEASTERN SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA

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Old Dominion University, 2023
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The current teacher shortage and the demand for high quality teachers presents a nationwide educational problem. Additionally, more than one-third of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of their careers (Callahan, 2015). The most vital and systemic change that is needed in our educational landscape is the attraction, retention, and professional development of quality teachers (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). If school district administrators expect new teachers to succeed, they need to provide them with unprecedented levels of support. This qualitative research study examined new elementary education teachers' perceptions of the influence of their mentorship program and the factors that influenced their relationships. Fifteen elementary teachers participated in the survey from one school district in Southeastern Virginia. The participant responses were analyzed using emergent coding. Results revealed four themes: (1) positive mentor relationship; (2) support system; (3) influence of teacher preparation and teacher induction program; (4) intricacies of the educational profession. Findings from this study can be used to inform mentorship practices in school districts to better support new teachers.

Keywords: mentoring, mentor, modeling, new teacher, social cognitive theory, self-efficacy, self-regulated learning, triadic reciprocal causation

This dissertation is dedicated to my beautiful daughters, Drew and Pierce. You are and always will be my biggest achievements. Don’t ever stop chasing your dreams. Remember, anything is possible.

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There has not been anyone more important to me in the pursuit of this dissertation and doctoral degree than my family. First, I would like to thank my brother, Tyler, who as a general surgeon always challenged and inspired me to achieve more. Second, I would like to thank my parents, Blair and Rickey. You have provided me with love and guidance in whatever direction I've pursued in life. You taught me that I can do anything I set my mind to, no matter the challenges along the way. You taught me to fight for the things that I want. I value your opinions and guidance more than you know. I'd also like to thank my husband, Steven. You inspire me and push me to be better. Thank you for the endless support, love, and unwavering belief in me. Finally, to my beautiful twin daughters, Pierce and Drew, while you are too young to understand your impact on me, I want you to know that you provide me unending inspiration. As my mom always said, family is the most important thing in life and should always come first. To my family, I love you.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Mentoring is often identified as a crucial step in achieving career success. Most successful people in different areas of human endeavors can point to a mentor who was pivotal to their career growth and success. The importance of mentoring throughout one's career has been emphasized, especially during professional transitions. Mentees of all different career paths report benefits including socialization into the profession, help with choice and fulfillment of career path, meaningful involvement in academic activities, and the development of close collaborative relationships (Gruppen et al., 2006). There is no better way to develop and retain new teachers than a strong partnership with a developed mentor.

To understand the importance of developing effective teachers through a mentoring process, it is pertinent to understand the current research behind teacher retention. Teachers enter the profession for a variety of reasons including working conditions, salary, the intrinsic value of helping students, and vacation time (Callahan, 2015). These benefits have been determined by new teachers to be greater in teaching than in any other profession. However, once a teacher is isolated in their classroom, day in and day out, the benefits are not strong enough. New teachers who leave the profession feel unprepared, overwhelmed, and under-supported. This produces frustration that inevitably leads to premature burnout. Teacher stress is linked with adverse professional outcomes including burnout, absenteeism, stress, and attrition. Sadly, more than one-third of teachers leave the profession within the first five years. If school leaders expect new teachers to succeed, it is pertinent that schools provide them unprecedented levels of support. They will need support as they face, resolve, and make difficult decisions that are a result of dilemmas of practice (Badiali & Burns, 2016). Learning in context requires new attention.

Background of the Problem

In the current state of education, one of the most vital systemic changes needed is the attraction, retention, and professional development of quality teachers that will lead to an increase in student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). This role falls on building administrators, central office administrators, and school districts. School districts need to recruit highly qualified teachers, while also developing a method to retain these teachers over the first three years of their careers (Collins, 2018). Without a system to support the new teachers, a district is at risk for teacher burnout and teacher attrition. This can lead to schools hiring inexperienced teachers, increasing class sizes, and cutting classes; ultimately, this lack of support will impact student achievement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

There is ample research surrounding the reasons behind new teachers leaving the education profession. These reasons include inadequacy in their teacher preparation programs and lack of support (Warsame & Valles, 2018). Other reasons for new teachers to leave include lack of support from school administration, little autonomy over classroom and curricular choices, student behavior, difficult working conditions, and high-stakes testing (Zaharis, 2019). Parker (2010) wrote that “retaining effective teachers is critical in reducing recruitment costs and providing instructional stability, particularly in schools with high-poverty and high-minority situations" (p. 120). Ingersoll and Strong (2012) estimate that the teacher turnover rate within the first five years of the start of their career is between 40% and 50%. With a turnover rate this high, school districts are succumbing to the concerns mentioned above, as well as detrimental financial costs (Carroll, 2007). In sum, the teacher shortage in the nation’s K-12 schools is an increasingly recognized, but poorly understood crisis. It is difficult to understand because researchers believe that the reasons are interdependent. A teacher shortage occurs because there

are not enough licensed teachers to fill the vacancies at schools. Researchers have estimated that the shortage in the 2017-2018 school year was about 110,000 teachers (Sutcher et al., 2016).

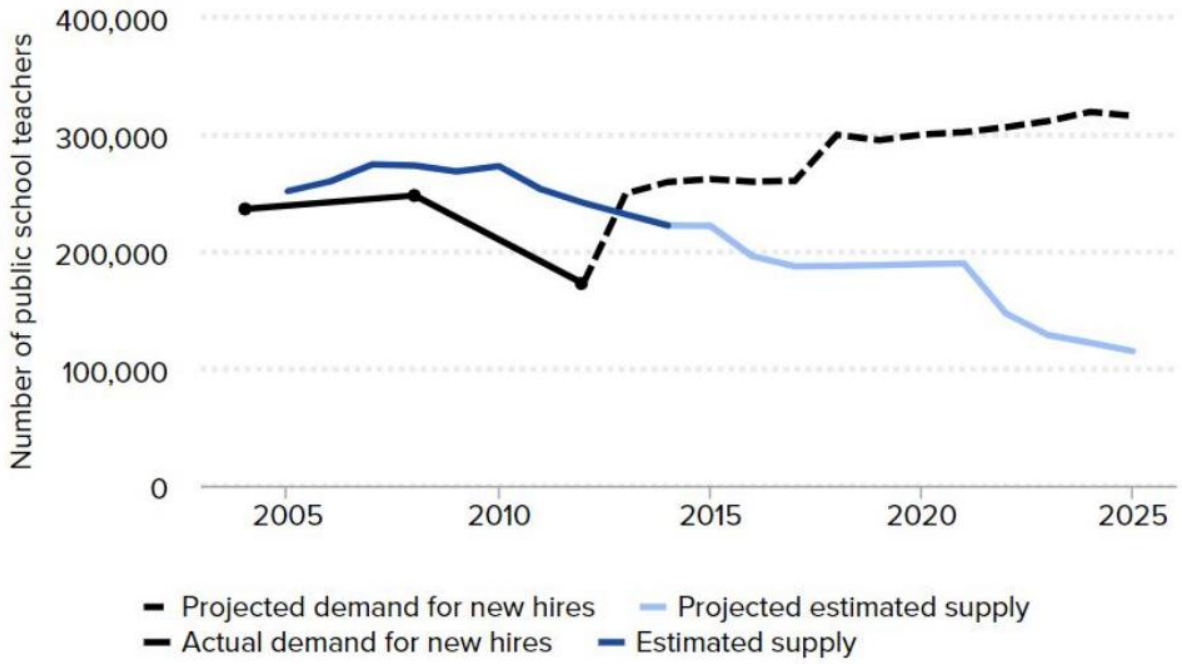
Vacancies happen for many different reasons: reduction in the attraction to teaching, increase in school enrollment, increase in class sizes, and an excessive number of teachers leaving their schools (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Teacher attrition and teacher turnover are also main reasons for the shortages (Sutcher et al., 2016). Teacher turnover is defined as a teacher moving schools versus teacher attrition in which a teacher leaves a district. When highly-qualified teachers leave the district, they are often replaced with underqualified or new teachers. The highest turnover of teachers occurs in high-poverty schools (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). States with lower pay scales for teachers have significantly more problems with turnover and with hiring quality teachers to fill their vacancies, especially in the areas of math, science, and special education (Carver-Thomas & Darling Hammond, 2017). When asked the reasons for leaving their teaching position, many teachers cite pay as the biggest reason, while including student behaviors, lack of support from administration, feeling ineffective, and time required outside of contractual hours to be successful (Gordon & Lowrey, 2017). In other exit interviews, teachers shared concerns about a disconnect between the teacher pay scale and the cost of living in the area (Gormly, 2019). Finally, other teachers shared stories of unimaginable beginnings to their careers where they experienced lack of resources, difficulty managing pacing, and concerns with student engagement (McCabe, 2006).

Teacher shortages and retention are long-standing concerns in the education profession. In the early 2000s, there was discussion over the change in the type of teaching applicant applying to the profession. Candidates were likely to include teachers who had completed an accredited program that included teacher education preparation as well as teachers who had not

completed a formal program (Cochran-Smith, 2001). In 2002, the National Education Association (NEA) was very clear that many newly-hired teachers had no teacher preparation, many were new to working, or career-switchers from previously successful careers. The NEA and researchers do not predict an end in sight for the teacher shortage, as seen in Figure 1. Ingersoll (2004) coined the term “the revolving door effect” (p. 12) to describe the vicious cycle that occurs at high-risk schools when they have to constantly replace the teachers who leave the profession.

Figure 1

Projected Teacher Supply and Demand for New Teachers, 2003–2004 through 2024–2025 School Years



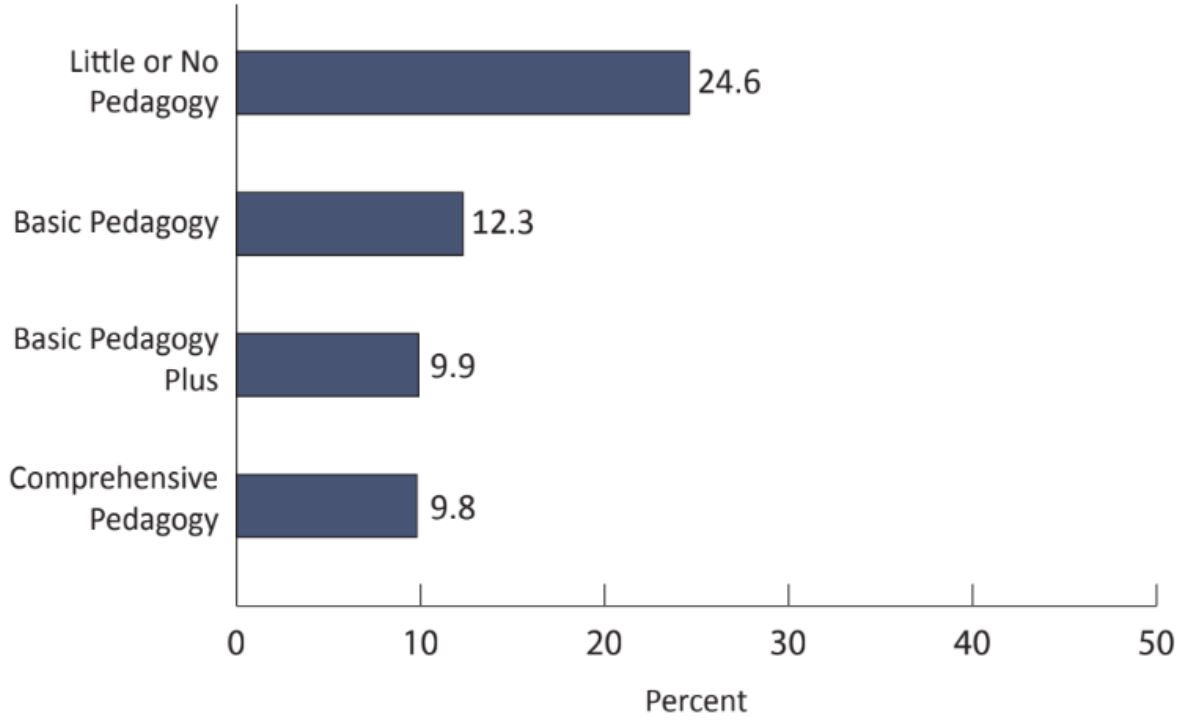
Note. Taken *from Sutcher and colleagues. 2016. A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S. Learning Policy Institute, September 2016.*

More recently, administrators and educators are working through both positive and negative experiences with the change in teacher preparation programs. Ingersoll and colleagues (2014) found that those teachers who were enrolled in a traditional teacher education program were slightly less likely to leave teaching after their first year (at a 90% level of confidence) than those who entered through a non-traditional or alternative program. Ingersoll and colleagues reported that they saw strong ties between pedagogy and attrition. Educators who took more methods and strategies courses in their teacher preparation programs were significantly less likely to resign after their first year of teaching, as seen in Figure 2. Those educators who took three to four courses were 36% less likely to leave than those who did not take any methods

courses. Moreover, first year teachers who had a semester of student teaching were over three times less likely to resign from their positions than those who had no practice teaching at all.

Figure 2

Predicted Probability of Attrition of Beginning Teachers, by Various Pedagogy Practices: 2004-2005



Note. From Ingersoll and colleagues. 2014. What Are The Effects of Teacher Education and Preparation on Beginning Teacher Attrition?, July 2014.

With a need to retain high-quality teachers, an emphasis has been placed on developing effective mentorship programs to support new teachers in the first years of their careers. Kram (1985) defined a mentor as "a more-experienced employee who advises, guides, and helps to improve the career development of a less-experienced employee (i.e., the mentee) within the organization" (p. 127). The concept of a mentor is idealized in many career paths, including education. Mentoring is an important component in a new teacher's career. The relationship

between the decision to remain in the teaching profession and mentorship received provides a strong foundation for beginning teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2010). Darling-Hammond (2010) also concluded that the emphasis for the mentorship program should be on professional development that has an impact on teacher practice and student outcomes. This should be "sustained, ongoing, content-focused, and embedded in professional learning communities and mentorship relationships where teachers work over time on problems of practice with other teachers in their subject area" (p. 157).

Callahan (2015) identified three areas to address when examining teacher retention: (1) reasons that new teachers leave the profession and to what extent a mentoring program can address these issues; (2) how to bridge the needs of new teachers with the attributes of an effective mentoring program; and (3) the positive effects of a strong mentoring program. She wrote:

> When new teachers specifically participated in a mentoring program, they were more committed to their jobs, had higher job satisfaction, and were more likely to stay within the profession of teaching. In addition, studies have shown that mentoring programs afford new teachers the ability to perform at higher levels in aspects of teaching, such as keeping students on task, developing effective lesson plans, utilizing appropriate questioning techniques, adjusting classroom activities to meet student interests, cultivating a positive classroom environment, and establishing successful classroom management. (p. 9)

Purpose of the Study

Research has indicated that teacher quality is the single most critical factor in student success (Ingersoll, 2003). Ingersoll also showed how high teacher turnover has stymied any

efforts to improve teacher quality. The work of fighting the teacher shortage has received national attention by state, district, and local policy makers. New teachers may benefit from the support of a strong mentorship program and mentor/mentee relationships. The concept of the mentorship program is relatively new as only about 50% of states had mentorship programs for beginning teachers in 2012 (Goldrick et. al., 2012).

The goal of this study was to investigate the mentoring experiences of elementary teachers in their first year of teaching. The current education field is struggling with the hiring of elementary teachers and retaining high-quality teacher candidates (Darling-Hammond, 2010). There is a shortage of teaching applicants. Additionally, many new teachers leave the profession in their first three years (Callahan, 2015). New teachers lack opportunities to grow and develop past their preservice and student teaching experience. Many school divisions across the country lack an identifiable mentorship program to provide ongoing professional development (PD) to new elementary teachers in the first three years of their careers. In this study, I detailed a description and summary of feedback provided by first year teachers; I described circumstances that positively influence the mentor and mentee relationship while depicting influence on the retention of new teachers. When mentors and mentees are able to form a positive relationship, the length in career span of the new teacher increases (Clark & Bynes, 2012).

Significance of the Study

In today's society, most adults can identify with a mentor, both personally and professionally. Mentoring is a critical component of effective teacher development programs and mentorship programs are being implemented in most of the school districts across the United States (Daresh, 1995). Unfortunately, there is a lot of variability amongst both formal and informal teacher mentorship programs (Bush, 2009). This accounts for some difficulties in

analysis of the research, along with longitudinal problems due to the lack of teacher retention within the first three to five years of an educator's career. The results of this study provided a specific school district feedback on their current mentorship program and its influence on teacher retention of elementary teachers in their first year of their careers.

Key Terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study:

Mentoring: A developmentally oriented interpersonal relationship that is typically between a more experienced individual and a less experienced individual (Baranik et al., 2010).

Mentor: A counselor and a teacher who instructs, admonishes, and assists a junior trainee or colleague in attaining success (Gruppen et al., 2006).

Modeling: Learners observing others perform actions in context (Rosenthal & Bandura, 1978).

New Teacher: A beginning or inexperienced teacher who has three or fewer years of experience as stated on their licensure provided by the board of licensure (Virginia Department of Education, 2022).

Social cognitive theory: A framework that emphasizes that learning occurs in a social context and that much of what is learning is gained through observation (Bandura, 1977).

Self-efficacy: An individual's belief in their ability to complete a given task or project (Bandura, 1995).

Self-regulated learning: The process that enables individuals to guide their goal directed activities over time, including the modulation of affect, cognition, and behavior (Bandura, 1991).

Triadic Reciprocal Causation: Personal factors in the form of cognitive, affective, and biological events, behavior patterns, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bidirectionally (Bandura, 2009)

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Retention of teachers is an on-going problem across the United States, including public school districts in the Southeastern region of Virginia. For example, on the first day of school for the 2019-2020 school year, there were over 3,500 teaching vacancies in the state (Maxwell, 2019). Attrition, turnover, and lack of support are a few of the reasons for vacancies in school districts (Sutcher et al., 2016). The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences and perceptions of general education elementary teachers and their mentoring experience in their first year of teaching.

Review of Literature

With a need to retain high-quality teachers, an emphasis has been placed on developing effective mentorship programs to support new teachers in the first years of their careers. Kram (1985) defined a mentor as "a more-experienced employee who advises, guides, and helps to improve the career development of a less-experienced employee (i.e., the mentee) within the organization" (p. 119). The concept of a mentor is idealized in many career paths, including education. Mentoring is an important component in a new teacher's career. The decision to remain in the teaching profession is correlated to the strength of the mentoring (Cochran-Smith, 2010). Darling-Hammond (2010) also concluded that the emphasis for the mentorship program should be on professional development that has an impact on teacher practice and student outcomes. This should be "sustained, ongoing, content-focused, and embedded professional learning communities and mentorship relationships where teachers work over time on problems of practice with other teachers in their subject area" (p. 253).

Social cognitive theory is the idea that much human learning occurs by learning in a social environment. The overarching framework of social cognitive theory indicates that learners can discover new behaviors by the simple act of observing others. Bandura (1977) believed that by observing others, people acquire knowledge of rules, skills, strategies, beliefs, and attitudes. Many ideas of social cognitive theory lend themselves well to instruction and student learning. Mentoring is an instructional application of social cognitive theory. Mentoring refers to interactions between more experienced mentors and less experienced mentees, where mentors provide career (instrumental) and psychosocial (relational) knowledge, advice, and support. Ideally, mentoring should incorporate a mutual learning that fosters more of an apprenticeship approach. The overall goal is guidance over a longer period of time (Eby et al., 2007). In this chapter, I will provide a review of the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory as well as a literature review of mentoring and the relationship between the theory and mentorship.

SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

Theoretical Framework

Social cognitive theory originated from the idea of social learning theory in 1977, primarily from the work of Albert Bandura. The framework emphasizes that "learning occurs in a social context, and that much of what is learned is gained through observation" (Anderman & Anderman, 2009, p. 834). Bandura's theory arrived at a time when other behavior theorists believed that learning was a result of an experience with an environment related to the amount of reinforcement. Social learning theory directly relates to observations and modeling, as well as their dual role in how and why people learn. Bandura (1977) analyzed the correlation between learning and people's experiences with their environment. Social learning does not occur as a passive activity; instead, it is a direct result of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation.

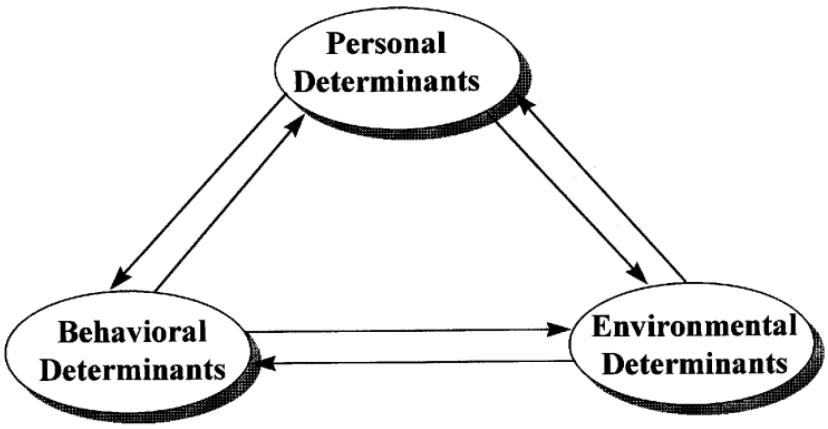
Social learning theory and social cognitive theory are almost identical in their schools of thought. Social learning theory is older and related to many theorists; social cognitive theory appears to be broader in its scope and is directly associated with Bandura. Bandura explained that "most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action" (p. 192). Social cognitive theory has since been applied to many different aspects of psychology to include but not limited to clinical, social, developmental, and educational. It is also applicable to mental and physical health, school achievement, athletics, and career choice.

Through social cognitive theory, Bandura (1986) introduced the idea of psychosocial functioning as it relates to the idea of triadic reciprocal causation. Previously, human behavior was described through a unidirectional causational lens. The unidirectional causation typically involves one's behavior being shaped by either an environmental influence or internal dispositions. In triadic reciprocal causation, "personal factors in the form of cognitive, affective, and biological events, behavior patterns, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bidirectionally" (Bandura, 2009, p. 266). Simply put, the relationship between the person, environment, and behavior is transactional (see Figure 3). In this triadic reciprocal causation, one must acknowledge the influence of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. These can have a varying degree of influence based on the different circumstances of each individual person (Bandura, 1989). This idea of bi-directionality among the social cognitive theory model allows for movement between each section: personal, behavioral, and environmental. More simply, triadic reciprocal causation can be described as the idea that an individual's behavior is both influenced by and influences personal determinants and

environmental determinants. There is not a fixed pattern or relation that exists that determines causation between personal events, behavioral events, and/or environmental events.

Figure 3

Bandura's Triadic Reciprocal Causation



Note. Taken from *Bandura, A. (2009). Social cognitive theory of mass communication.*

The relationship between personal and environmental determinants involves the idea that "human expectations, beliefs, emotional bents, and cognitive competencies are developed and modified by social influences that convey information and activate emotional reactions through modeling instruction and social persuasion" (Bandura, 1989, p. 3). Bandura also argued that there are physical traits that fall under personal determinants that can influence how the environment around a person responds. These may include, but are not limited to, race, sex, gender, performance, age, status, etc. The relationship between behavioral and environmental determinants demonstrates that the environment does not exist independently, but that human beings are constantly products of their environment. Bandura shared in his research that people are active in choosing environments that correlate with their personalities. A human being's behaviors are further exacerbated by the environment. Finally, the relationship between personal and behavioral determinants is similarly interchangeable and interreliant. The concept behind the

personal determinant is the idea of "expectations, beliefs, self-perceptions, goals, and intentions can influence a person's behaviors along with their biological properties" (p. 1181). In the next sections, I will dive further into each of the three concepts: personal determinants, behavioral determinants, and environmental determinants.

Personal Determinants

Bandura believed that personal influences included cognitions, beliefs, perceptions, and emotions (Schunk & Usher, 2019). These influences are what help motivate human beings and include things such as goals, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, self-evaluation, social comparisons, values, and attributions. Goals, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations will be discussed in depth further in this literature review. Bandura hoped that by having an individual set goals, that individual would also develop the skill of self-evaluation (Bandura, 1986). If an individual sets progress goals with performance standards, they are more likely to evaluate their progress towards the goal, resulting in self-evaluation.

Social comparisons are exactly what they sound like: making comparisons of ourselves with others. Social comparisons can affect motivational outcomes (Schunk & Usher, 2019). An individual who observes another doing a task successfully will believe that they have the opportunity to also be successful at such a task. For example, when modeling is used in a teaching practice, the teachers who observe a successful model are often able to reproduce the successful teaching strategy. It is important to note that the similarity between the observer and the model can result in stronger social comparisons. Bandura (1986) believed that a similarity in age, gender, and ability levels can increase the observer's self-efficacy. This concept has the potential to backfire as the opposite can occur: individuals who observe failure may have a resulting lower self-efficacy due to social comparisons.

Behavioral Determinants

In continuing with Bandura's (1986) triadic reciprocal causation, the idea of behavioral determinants relates to the idea that an individual's behavior can include activities, effort, persistence, achievement, and environmental regulation. Individuals who are more motivated to succeed typically choose to engage in activities, expend effort and persist on difficult tasks, achieve at higher levels, and regulate features of their environment to promote success (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016). Bandura (1986) tied in the behavioral determinants to include knowledge, outcome expectations, goals, and facilitators as components that can influence one's behavior.

Environmental Determinants

There are many different influences that can impact a person's environment. These environmental determinants can affect an individual's motivational processes and outcomes. An individual's environment is not a fixed entity. In other words, essentially there is the potential that some aspects of the physical and social environment may have an impact on whether or not an individual likes a certain event (Bandura, 1989). Bandura believed that most aspects of the environment do not operate as an influence until they are activated by appropriate behavior. For example, if a person observes a peer successfully perform a task (environmental influence), this can raise the observer's self-efficacy.

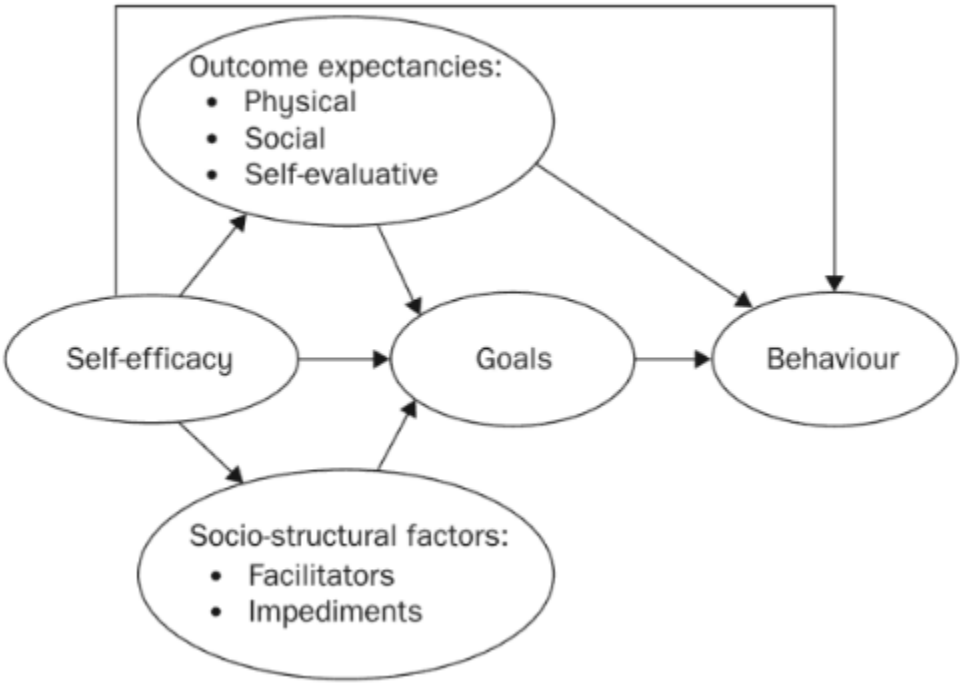
Five Concepts

Social cognitive theory has five major concepts. These concepts are described further in this section, but can also be viewed in Figure 4. The first concept is observational learning, which is often referred to as vicarious modeling. Essentially, this is the idea that learning is a direct result of watching behaviors in a person's environment. Bandura (1989) emphasized that four conditions are necessary for observational learning: attention, retention, production, and

motivation. Students require attention in order to watch a behavior, which would result in learning. Retention is needed to be able to maintain the observed behavior and use it later. Students require an ability to produce or draw on stored conclusions to complete what they have learned. Motivation is required for students to be intrinsically driven to complete any of the aforementioned tasks. Bandura believed that modeling could also impact observational behavior. Observational learning through modeling occurs when observers display new patterns of behavior that, prior to modeling, had zero chance of occurrence (Rosenthal & Zimmerman, 1978). Modeling can also strengthen or weaken an individual's natural instinct to perform a behavior; if an individual observes that a model completes a negative task without negative repercussions, the individual may be more likely to repeat the negative task.

Figure 4

An Illustration of Social Cognitive Theory



Note. Taken from *Bandura (1989). Social Cognitive Theory*.

The second concept is perceived self-efficacy. Bandura relied heavily on self-efficacy as it correlates to social cognitive theory. He drew on his own self-efficacy theory which postulates that different modes of influence can alter a person's behavior (Bandura, 1978). A person's behavior can be altered because it influences choice in activities and environmental settings. According to Bandura (1978), if something helps determine a choice behavior, it can also have a serious impact on personal development. Whether an individual believes that they can achieve a certain level of success on a certain task is a product of their own self-efficacy. Self-efficacy theory also introduces the idea of self-perception; self-perception determines how much effort and how much time an individual will exert when they are faced with a challenging task.

The third major concept is outcome expectations. Outcome expectations, as classified by Bandura (2001), “are not the characteristics of agentive acts; they are the consequences of them” (p. 6). Simply put, outcome expectations are the results or outcomes of actions or events that an individual chooses to engage in. Outcome expectations reflect beliefs about direct actions that will occur if an individual performs a behavior. These beliefs are important to social cognitive theory because “they help distinguish the decisions people make about what actions to take and what behaviors to suppress, based on their own experiences and the observations of others” (Anderman & Anderman, 2009, p. 187). The frequency with which a behavior occurs will be directly dependent on whether the outcomes are positive or negative. Lastly, when discussing outcomes, Bandura (1977, 1986) believed that outcomes come from sources. If an individual is symbolically thinking about what could happen based on an action, this could be an outcome source. The individual potentially could think symbolically to imagine consequence; the individual would make a decision to adjust or not to adjust their behavior based on the notion of the consequence (Bandura, 1977). A second source of outcomes involves the modeling of behaviors that resulted in a valued outcome. For example, this might look like an individual watching another individual receive praise for completing a task. This might motivate them to pursue a task to receive the adequate and/or appropriate praise. A third and final source is the inventive value of the outcome or consequence of the action. This might look like an individual putting effort into their job that pays them well and provides them with appropriate accolades for their efforts versus a job with zero accolades and poor compensation (Fouad, 2006).

The fourth concept of social cognitive theory is goal setting. This concept reflects an individual’s internal expectations for emancipated, desired, or preferred outcomes (Anderman & Anderman, 2009). Anderman and Anderman shared that “people not only learn, they use

forethought to envision the future, identify desired outcomes, and generate plans of action" (p. 834). As seen in Figure 2, an individual's ability to make goals is directly correlated to other concepts of social cognitive theory. In order for an individual to make a behavior a habit, they would need to form a goal and attempt to complete an action. A goal would serve as their incentive and guide their behaviors.

The final and fifth concept is self-regulated learning. Self-regulation refers to the process that enables individuals to guide their goal directed activities over time, including the modulation of affect, cognition, and behavior. Essentially, self-regulation is the ability to control oneself by oneself. Self-regulation is directly tied to self-regulation theory, which describes why children and/or adults have the ability to exert a large amount of effort on learning different aspects of life. Self-regulated learning reflects a person's ability to use goal-oriented behavior to learn a certain context. Bandura (1991) believed that the major self-regulative mechanism operated through three principles: self-monitoring of one's behavior, its determinants, and its effects; judgment of one's behavior as it relates to personal items and environmental factors; and self-reaction (Bandura, 1991).

As seen in Figure 4, the concepts are directly correlated to one another. People would not set goals for themselves if they believed that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. Because of this, goal setting is directly related to outcome expectations. The outcome expectation is analyzed prior and/or during the goal setting. Self-efficacy continues to be important after an analysis of the outcome expectations and the goal setting. When an individual starts to translate the task into action, the individual will need to self-regulate the process and the pursuit of the achievable goal (Bandura, 1977).

Critical Issues with Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's social cognitive theory has been analyzed through many different applicable fields and has provided researchers with an incredible degree of knowledge. As with all theories, there are critics and limitations to his theory. The largest acknowledged limitation is the concept of ignoring the internal and unconscious thought process and emotions (Bandura, 1989). Other limitations include but are not limited to: loosely organized, disregard for biological and/or hormonal responses, lack of regard for emotion and/or motivation, and overarching vagueness (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016). In this section, I will briefly touch on a few of these critical concerns and limitations of the theory.

Many researchers and theorists claim that social cognitive theory is loosely structured or too expansive. With all of the concepts and different aspects, it is difficult to implement. With the dynamic abilities of individuals, it is often difficult to implement such a broad theory. Other critics fault Bandura for ignoring the biological and/or hormonal response of individuals. Bandura (1989) proposed the following:

> The behavior of the person is largely influenced by learning, but some evolutionary scientists argue that the behavior of the person is influenced by emotional responses, which is eventually based on the various biological factors and evolution, rather than through observation. (p. 1177)

Evolutionary psychologists, such as Steven Pinker (2007), have argued that behavior can be controlled by emotional responses to biological factors. Pinker believed that these biological factors are directly influenced by evolution, rather than conditioning or observation. This is directly opposed to Bandura's perspective. In the next section, I will provide a review of mentoring to include the theoretical framework, successful mentorship programs, and challenges.

Mentoring

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura asserted that behavior is learned through observation (Bandura, 1977). Social cognitive theory encompasses the framework that "learning occurs in a social context, and that much of what is learned is gained through observation" (Anderman & Anderman, 2009, p. 756). Bandura (1977) believed that learners can discover new behaviors by observing others. By doing this, an individual can acquire new skills, strategies, and beliefs. This theoretical framework applies itself well to the concept of instruction, student learning, and mentorship of professionals, including teachers. Mentoring is an instructional application of social cognitive theory. Mentoring has been defined as "a process where one person provides individual support and challenge to another professional" (Bush, 2009, p. 83). Through social cognitive theory, individuals can learn by observing and modeling others; thus, it can be concluded that teachers can learn by observing and modeling their mentors. Ideally, mentoring should incorporate a mutual learning that fosters more of an apprenticeship approach. The overall goal is guidance over a longer period of time (Maor & McConney, 2015).

History of Mentoring

The concept of mentoring dates as far back as the ancient Greeks (Rosenthal & Zimmerman, 1978). When Odysseus elected to take his ten-year odyssey, he entrusted his friend Mentor to raise his son. Mentor did such a good job, with the help of Athena, that the name Mentor translated into the European language to describe "someone who acts as a trusted counselor or guide for someone younger or less experienced" (Rosenthal & Zimmerman, 1978, p. 219). The Greeks also used mentoring to refer to observational learning from others'

behaviors. Today, a mentor is a counselor and a teacher and instructs, admonishes, and assists a junior trainee or colleague in attaining success (Gruppen et al., 2006).

Developing Effective Mentors

Before presenting the analysis of the mentoring program, it is imperative to discuss the development of the mentors. The development of an effective mentor is not something to be taken lightly. Mentors do not form overnight; they need to be developed and trained. Research has ascertained some valuable characteristics of mentors. These include being knowledgeable and respected in their field, being responsive and available to their mentees, being interested in the mentoring relationship, being aware of the mentee's capabilities, motivating the mentee appropriately, and advocating for the mentee (Bhagia & Tinsley, 2000). A mentor should provide positive and negative feedback (Bandura, 1977). Effective mentors should balance support with challenge by providing opportunities and setting expectations (Grainger, 2002). Gruppen and colleagues (2006) completed a study in which they reviewed the skills of mentoring and strategies for training mentors. From this work, they developed twelve tips for developing effective mentors in the list below in Table 1.

Table 1

Twelve Tips for Developing Effective Mentors

1	Mentors need clear expectations of their roles and enhanced listening and feedback skills.
2	Mentors need awareness of culture and gender issues. Mentor and mentee matching by gender and culture should not be mandatory, but available for those who desire it.
3	Mentors need to support their mentees, but challenge them too.

4	Mentors need a forum to express their uncertainties and problems. Mentors have problems too.
5	Mentors need to be aware of professional boundaries. Mentors should stick to mentoring.
6	Mentors also need mentoring.
7	Mentors need recognition. The value of mentoring needs to be raised.
8	Mentors need to be rewarded. Mentors can be rewarded in different ways.
9	Mentoring needs protected time. It cannot be done 'on the fly.'
10	Mentors need support. Mentors should not be expected to tackle personal or psychological problems.
11	Encourage peer mentoring. This should be a pyramidal model of mentoring.
12	Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the mentoring programs. Mentoring is a work in progress.

Note. Table recreated from *Ramani, S., Gruppen, L., & Kachur, E. K. (2006). Twelve tips for developing effective mentors. Medical Teacher, 28(5), 404-408.*

While mentoring is a vital part of every organization, the development of the mentors is also very important. More often than not, individuals serving in a mentorship capacity are not trained or provided enough professional development to understand their role (Bhagia & Tinsley, 2000). The mentors are often overloaded with their own professional and personal lives to be able to effectively mentor another individually. Mentors frequently report that after taking on a mentorship role, they are left in silos without any additional or ongoing professional development (Gruppen et al., 2006). In order to continue to develop effective mentors,

organizations should be required to train the mentors, provide them with mentoring services, and reward them monetarily for being successful. By rewarding success, individuals will begin to value mentoring, which in turn would change the culture around mentorship from invisible to a visible and valuable part of educational programming. This concept of value behind intrinsically motivating an individual by observation and mentoring directly relates back to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977).

It is imperative that administrators select mentors who are qualified and that time is allotted to the mentors to support the new teachers (Martin & Hauffman, 2016). These mentor teachers also need to be intrinsically motivated to work with the new teachers. An administrator should look to select a mentor who sees the mentorship as an opportunity to share their knowledge with new teachers and grow the teaching profession (Maor & McConney, 2015). When selecting an effective mentor, an administrator should look for teacher leaders who are willing to help the new teacher. The mentor should understand that this role and responsibility, while it might come with a small stipend, will be in addition to their regular teaching duties. Often, if a mentor is not selected appropriately, the mentor will have a burden put on their regular teaching duties or mentoring responsibilities, which will put a strain on the mentor-mentee relationship (Schechter, 2014). In the process of developing these effective mentors, professional development should be included for mentoring teachers and consideration for the amount of time allocated for mentorship (Leshem, 2014).

Developing A Successful Mentorship Program

Mentoring is vital in all organizations, including education. It is believed that a mentor relationship is strongest when the mentor and mentee share similar pedagogy and thinking (Gruppen et. al., 2006). Previous mentors and mentees with successful partnerships have pointed

out the value of having mentors participate in the same professional learning opportunities as the beginning teachers to ensure continuity of learning and practice (Murray et al., 2013). Creating opportunities for combined professional learning for mentors and mentees allows for conversations and shared understandings of issues tied to curriculum, student achievement, classroom management, etc. Identifying mentors who already demonstrate equitable classroom practices provides additional support for the beginning teacher. Developing these relationships creates significant professional growth and support for novice teachers who want to continue the conversation and try new techniques based on a specific pedagogical focus. Mentoring programs for new teachers are successful in helping a beginning teacher learn effective classroom practices, how the school and/or district operates, and in increasing teacher retention (Phillips, 2015). A successful mentoring program may include a variety of supports alongside the mentor relationship. These supports can include, but are not limited to, support by mentors, technology coaches, literacy coaches, and math coaches that work collaboratively together to support a new educator (Simos, 2013). The research behind mentorship programs for teachers that have proven to be successful denotes five key factors: (a) personal attributes, (b) system requirements, (c) pedagogical knowledge, (d) modeling, and (e) feedback.

Personal skills draw on a mentor's ability to use personal and interpersonal skills to develop a relationship with their mentees (Kerka, 1997). In teaching, learning takes place within a social setting. In the school setting, where social interactions and relationships with students are key to student achievement, interpersonal skills are seen as a basic requirement in the performance of an effective teacher (Ackley & Gall, 1992). A mentor needs to be supportive and attentive to their communication style and communicative relationship with the mentee (Kennedy & Dorman, 2002). The mentor also needs to build on the mentor-mentee relationship

to develop the mentee's skill in self-reflection of their teaching practices (Abell & Bryan, 1992). Kennedy and Dorman (2002) also promote the necessity of the mentor to instill positive attitudes and confidence; this is reliant on the mentor's ability to draw on personal skills. By using personal skills, the mentor will encourage the mentee to reflect on their teaching experiences to foster the development of the mentee's teaching identity (Kennedy & Dorman, 2002). A benefit of mentoring with personal skills to reflect on their teaching is the development of a teaching identity. By utilizing personal skills, the mentor and mentee will develop a give and take relationship where they care about each other both professionally and personally. Often, the relationship between the mentor and mentee is much closer than in other professional relationships (Gruppen et al., 2006). Without the development of this relationship, the growth of an effective new teacher can be limited. Through the mentor's personal skills, they also set an example for the desired level of professionalism in teaching (Ackley & Gall, 1992). Besides professionalism, mentors can also pass down character traits including, but not limited to, authenticity, gentleness, enthusiasm, patience, consistency, and attitude (Brooks et al., 2005).

System requirements are the daily ins and outs of the school routine. Typically, a beginning teacher has little to no experience with the daily impact of a teacher on students' lives. Although they have completed a practicum or student teaching experience, this is marginal compared to the daily expectations of a teacher. Beginning teachers enter their first day and year of school without any experience with the organization and so-called politics of school life. They need opportunities to gain theoretical and practical knowledge of schools and school districts (Bybee, 1997). A mentor can provide the mentee with these system requirements including school routines, cultural norms, school culture, curriculum, state standards, and so on. A mentor can help the new teacher meet the necessary standards by unpacking their teaching, reviewing

mandated curriculum, and assisting with policies that regulate the quality of teaching practices (Peterson & Williams, 1998).

The third factor that develops a successful mentorship program is the emphasis on the importance of pedagogical knowledge. The mentor and mentee need to spend time analyzing different areas of teacher knowledge that are proven to be key for effective teachers. These include, but are not limited to, classroom management, time allocation, planning, understanding of misconceptions, and dealing with difficulties with lack of student achievement (Abell & Lynn, 1999). Pedagogical knowledge passed on from mentor to mentee might also include problem solving skills, questioning skills, and implementing effective teaching practices (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992). Brooks and colleagues (2005) believed that "educators agree that mentoring programs are intended to allow preservice teachers to interact with someone more skillful and knowledgeable" (p. 37). By putting a focus on mentors developing a strong pedagogical knowledge, the mentee will develop confidence in their teaching practices. Mentors can help pass along their pedagogical knowledge that they have developed over their careers. This will create a framework of teaching practices for the mentees that would include learning activities, materials, and strategies.

Modeling is another significant factor to consider when developing a strong mentorship program. The mentor's modeling of teaching practice is extremely important to effective teacher development. Darling-Hammond (2010) expressed that the quality of modeling and the opportunities for new teachers to observe and engage in practices appear key to successful pedagogical development. This directly aligns with Bandura's (1986) beliefs about modeling and mentorship. Modeling is an important means of acquiring skills, beliefs, and novel behaviors (Bandura, 1986). Bandura believed that an individual can increase their own self-efficacy by

watching another individual be successful at a particular task. Effective mentors are viewed as instructional coaches and are models of best instructional practices. They should be experienced and regarded as master teachers by their colleagues (Bandura, 1981). There should be a laser-like focus on the teacher practices and instructional issues that beginning teachers commonly have difficulties with their first few years. The mentors need to directly model building rapport with their students, how to effectively lesson plan, hands-on lessons, and effective classroom management (Abell & Lynn, 1999). An effective modeling approach will promote responses by the teacher, both inquiry-based and reflective, with a focus on student thinking, student engagement, and student understanding (Barab & Hay, 2001).

The final factor for a successful mentorship program is feedback. The provision of timely and frequent feedback is often cited as the single most important action for mentor teachers to take with their new mentee teachers (Brooks et al., 2005). Numerous researchers have reported that constructive feedback is a vital ingredient of the mentoring process (Bishop, 2001). Brooks and colleagues (2005) reported that:

> Feedback allows for the preservice teacher to reflect and improve in what is called the "reflective practicum." Specifically, mentors need to observe practice to provide oral and written feedback on aspects associated with the mentor's pedagogical knowledge, which also includes reviewing plans, and assisting in developing the mentee's evaluation of teaching. (p. 661)

Feedback must be specific to the new teacher's needs, which requires a willingness from the new teacher to participate in a two-way dialogue. Feedback must be descriptive and focused on specific teaching practices (Sanfellipo & Sinnanis, 2016).

Mentoring is an essential component of the development of strong, effective teachers. The provision of highly prepared mentors contributes to the success of new teachers during the beginning stages of their development. Substantial evidence supports Brooks and colleagues' (2005) five mentoring factors as a valid framework for measuring the impact of mentors on the development of new teachers.

Challenges and Voids in Mentoring

As with all practices, there are challenges and voids in the mentorship research that require further clarification and work. I will briefly touch on these areas in this section. The first area of concern focuses on the lack of professional development and/or training provided to the mentor teacher. In an analysis of current practice and conditions of mentor programs, often the mentor teacher feels unprepared for the mentor role (Gruppen et al., 2006). They receive little to no specific preparation for their role as a mentor. The clear majority of mentors in studies are veteran teachers who have had little professional development on mentoring, coaching, or providing effective feedback to preservice teachers or new teachers (Zeichner, 2009). Mentor teachers also report that they are often asked by administrators to provide feedback to new teachers. Feedback can come in many forms: praise and criticism, advice or telling mentees what to do, and correction. Without training, the mentor often provides the mentee with directive feedback. Directive feedback leaves little space for the mentee to dialogue with the mentor teacher and allow for reflection on their own beliefs and practices (Greeter et al., 2015).

Another void in this area of research is the concept of a lack of structure or standards around a common mentorship program. Across any given district, state, or the country, there is extreme variability in the type of support a new teacher can receive from a mentorship program (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Along with the need for redesign and explicit defining of mentorship

programs, there needs to be funding for implementation of mentorship programs. When a mentorship program is properly funded, as seen in other countries, it can be very successful (Darling-Hammond, 2016). Teachers need to be able to receive proper training that would assist them in coping with the difficulties they will face in the first few years of teaching. Simply put, "the financial reality is that few districts can afford to provide a trained cadre of instructional mentors in each school building and provide each of these mentors release time" (Hamlin & Hering, 1988, p. 126).

There is significant research around the challenges that new teachers face due to a lack of quality teacher education programs. Across the country and world, preservice teacher preparation programs are struggling to keep up because of the need to quickly hire candidates (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Programs are offering pragmatic approaches to train preservice teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003). For example, new teachers can often graduate from a teacher education program without having a student teaching experience. Darling-Hammond shared that "those who have done student teaching are less than half as likely to leave after the first year as those who have not student taught" (p. 312). Teachers who enter the teaching profession with alternate certifications that do not include student teaching have not had experience with classroom management, which is needed to be successful in the disadvantaged schools that they are typically hired to work in (Redding & Smith, 2016). It is difficult to learn everything necessary within a four-year framework of teacher education programs. Even the best teacher education programs only lay the building blocks for new teachers to start their teaching career. Mentor teachers are not able to fully compensate and replace a lack of teacher education (Gordon & Maxey, 2000).

There appears to be gaps in the literature around an analysis of strong mentor to mentee relationships compared to the effectiveness of the new teacher. It is also suggested that future studies dive into mentor teachers' views of their mentees. This would explore the idea of capturing the differences between their viewpoints of each other. It would provide parsimony and comparability for future research.

The final void that appears to impact mentorship is the concept behind an informal mentor with new teachers. An "informal mentor is who the teacher goes to for help by their choice" (Desimone et al., 2015, p. 102). The informal mentor can be just as successful and important to a new teacher's success as the formal mentor. Desimone and colleagues conducted a study in 2015 that revealed that the informal mentor was incredibly important in the success of the new teacher because they have the ability to offer immediate assistance and feedback. In this study, the feedback was, more often than not, complementary to the feedback that the new teacher was receiving from the mentor (Desimone et al., 2015).

Social Cognitive Theory and Mentoring

While there is little research available on the mentorship of new teachers and its relation to social cognitive theory, there is an ample amount of research about mentoring in different fields outside of education. According to Eby (2010), "mentoring refers to a developmentally oriented interpersonal relationship that is typically between a more experienced individual and a less experienced individual" (p. 518). In many career paths as well as with influential leaders, less-experienced employees have attributed their success to having a strong mentor who can promote leadership development (London, 2002). The theory behind the mentoring research aligns itself to different aspects of social cognitive theory including self-regulated learning and self-efficacy.

To recap, self-regulated learning is “a deliberate, and focused process whose core includes goals, motivation, and the systematic control of effort” (Schunk & Mullen, 2013, p. 364). The concepts behind self-regulated learning align with a growth mindset, performance improvement, persistence, and motivation. A self-regulated learner should be reflective in their learning (Grant & Dweck, 2003). By focusing on self-regulated learning with mentorship, an individual (i.e., mentee) would develop the capacity to reflect on their learning, observations, and conversations with another individual (i.e., mentor) and make necessary changes to strengthen and hone their skills.

According to Bandura (1995), self-efficacy is defined as one’s belief in their ability to complete a task related to a given situation. It is the belief that an individual can reach a goal. An individual’s self-efficacy can impact thinking, acting, feeling, and motivation to complete tasks. An individual’s development in particular areas is dependent on how the individual interprets the success and the context in which the performance occurred (Bandura, 1997). This suggests that mentoring can help mentees make sense of their experiences and synthesize the new information into positive outcomes. There is a great deal of research on self-efficacy in new teachers. New teachers who have positive beliefs about their abilities and have confidence in their capabilities are much more likely to be successful in their first years in their teaching careers. Self-efficacy is increased when teachers are able to watch a model of a skill or task, and then have the chance to practice it themselves (Schunk, 1981). Modeling is an important means of acquiring skills, beliefs, and novel behaviors (Bandura, 1986). An individual can increase their personal self-efficacy by observing a person similar to them succeed at a particular task. By watching them be successful, it will motivate the individual to try the task themselves; people are intrinsically

motivated by seeing the success of others. The same is true for the converse of this situation: if an individual observes someone failing, they will believe that they will fail completing the task.

There is a bit of research around models that align behavioral appropriateness to the outcome expectations. As explained earlier, outcome expectations are a centralized concept of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. The concept of behavioral appropriateness explains the idea that the more alike the mentor is to the mentee, the greater the likelihood that the mentor and mentee will develop a strong relationship. On top of that, the more alike the mentor is to the mentee, the greater the likelihood that the actions by the mentor are appropriate and likely to be reproduced by the mentee (Akamatsu & Thelen, 1974). Similarity between mentor and mentee can be beneficial where the mentee is uncertain about their performance abilities. For example, if a mentee lacks task familiarity and does not have a strong self-efficacy, the mentee may rely on the attributes of their mentor (Bandura, 1986).

Social cognitive theory, with the constructs of self-regulated learning and self-efficacy, are directly related to teacher behaviors, teacher retention, and mentorship. A new teacher's self-efficacy beliefs are important because they can predict teacher behaviors and retention (Feng et al., 2019). Self-efficacy beliefs are also associated with teacher attitudes towards their teaching profession (Akdemir, 2019). Teachers with positive attitudes and strong mentorship opportunities are found to have high levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Dursun, 2019). Through social cognitive theory, it can be proposed that more learning takes place when (1) teachers are able to see multiple models of teaching, (2) teacher self-efficacy is promoted, and (3) teachers have access to resources and mentoring (Schunk, 2012). According to Bandura, modeling is the concept that an individual can learn by observing another individual perform

actions in context (Rosenthal & Bandura, 1978). A mentor teacher should model best teaching practices and model strong tier one instruction for the new teacher.

Conclusion

Through the research reviewed here, it is clear that educators are not only faced with a teaching shortage, but a lack of highly qualified candidates. Alongside that, 33% of teachers leave the education field within their first five years of teaching (Morrison, 2019). By providing new teachers with a strong and comprehensive mentorship program, school districts will plan for future success by demonstrating a commitment to the future of their new teachers. New teachers want support by being provided a comprehensive mentorship program (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017).

Darling-Hammond (2010) argued for the importance of a change in teacher education programs and mentorship programs from learning to practice to learning from practice. By strengthening mentorship programs and/or new teacher induction programs, it is invaluable to provide teachers with increased opportunities to learn to teach within embedded, supported, and authentic clinical contexts (Badiali & West Burns, 2016). If we expect new teachers to succeed, it is pertinent that we provide them with unprecedented levels of support. In the next chapter, I will present the findings of the questionnaire given to the new teachers.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the current state of education, one of the most vital systemic changes needed is the attraction, retention, and professional development of quality teachers that will lead to an increase in student achievement (Darling Hammond & Sykes, 2003). This role falls on building-level administrators, central office administrators, and school districts. School districts need to recruit highly qualified teachers, while also developing a method to retain these teachers over the first three years of their careers (Collins, 2018). Without a system to support new teachers, a district is at risk for teacher burnout and attrition. This can lead to schools hiring inexperienced teachers, increasing class sizes, and cutting classes; ultimately, this lack of support will impact student achievement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

There is ample research regarding why new teachers leave the education profession. These reasons include inadequate teacher preparation programs and lack of support (Warsame & Valles, 2018). Other reasons for new teachers leaving include support from school administration, autonomy over classroom and curricular choices, student behavior, working conditions, and high-stakes testing (Zaharis, 2019). Parker (2010) wrote, “retaining effective teachers is critical in reducing recruitment costs and providing instructional stability, particularly in schools with high-poverty and high-minority situations” (p. 116). Researchers estimate that the teacher turnover rate within the first five years of the start of their career is between 40% and 50% (Ingersoll & Strong, 2012). With a turnover rate this high, school districts are succumbing to the concerns mentioned above, as well as detrimental financial costs (Carroll, 2007).

With a need to retain high-quality teachers, an emphasis has been placed on developing effective mentorship programs to support new teachers in the first years of their careers. Kram

(1985) defined a mentor as "a more-experienced employee who advises, guides, and helps to improve the career development of a less-experienced employee (i.e., the mentee) within the organization" (p. 111). The concept of a mentor is idealized in many career paths, including education. Mentoring is an important component in a new teacher's career. The relationship between the decision to remain in the teaching profession and mentorship received provides a strong foundation for beginning teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2010). Darling-Hammond (2010) also concluded that the emphasis for the mentorship program should be on professional development that has an impact on teacher practice and student outcomes. This should be "sustained, ongoing, content-focused, and embedded professional learning communities and mentorship relationships where teachers work over time on problems of practice with other teachers in their subject area" (p. 27).

Callahan (2015) identified three areas to address when examining teacher retention: (1) reasons that the new teachers leave the profession and to what extent a mentoring program can address these issues; (2) how to bridge the needs of new teachers with the attributes of an effective mentoring program; and (3) the positive effects of a strong mentoring program. She noted:

> When new teachers specifically participated in a mentoring program, they were more committed to their jobs, had higher job satisfaction, and were more likely to stay within the profession of teaching. In addition, studies have shown that mentoring programs afford new teachers the ability to perform at higher levels in aspects of teaching, such as keeping students on task, developing effective lesson plans, utilizing appropriate questioning techniques, adjusting classroom activities to meet student interests,

> cultivating a positive classroom environment, and establishing successful classroom management. (p. 14).

With the context of the research on teacher retention and current shortages in mind, I will now transition into the purpose and methodology of the research.

Purpose of the Study

In this study I examined the impact of mentorship on new teacher retention in 15 teachers' first year of their education career. The education field is struggling with the hiring of elementary teachers and retaining high-quality teacher candidates. There is a shortage of teaching applicants. Alongside of this, many new teachers leave the teaching profession in their first three years. New teachers lack opportunities to grow and develop past their preservice and student teaching experiences. The overall goal of this study was to analyze the influence of a mentor and mentorship program across a school division with an emphasis on new, K-5 elementary teachers.

Research Questions

The overall goal of this study was to explore new teacher mentorship programs across a school division with a specific focus on novice elementary teachers. In this study, I aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What influence does a mentorship program have on the perceptions of new elementary teachers during their first year of teaching?
2. What factors positively impact the mentor/mentee relationship?

Research Methods and Design

This study was a qualitative research design. I provided a questionnaire to new teachers in a school division in Southeastern Virginia. For the remainder of this dissertation, I will refer to

the school division as the Sunshine School District (SSD). I identified elementary schools of similar demographics based on the comparable schools list. This list is provided by the school division. The number of schools identified was dependent on the number of new teachers available during the 2022-2023 school year at each school. New teachers were provided a questionnaire during their first year of employment with the school division. The questionnaire was formatted with mainly open-ended questions focused on the new teacher's first year of teaching including the influence of a mentor, teacher preparation, and impact of the school division's mentorship program. The questionnaire served as the only method of data collection. The answers to the questionnaire were coded using emergent qualitative coding. I selected this type of coding to find broad trends and themes amongst the responses.

Qualitative Research Approach

When determining the methods for this study, I analyzed and considered several qualitative approaches to research that all lend themselves to qualitative research design. After a review of the approaches, I selected qualitative design as the research approach. The study was designed as a structured questionnaire to provide the researcher with perceptions of the new teacher (Maxwell, 2013).

Population and Recruitment

According to the Virginia Department of Education (2023), the SSD is a school division in the Southeastern Region, consisting of 55 elementary schools, 15 middle schools, 12 high schools, and a number of post-secondary specialty centers. The district is home to approximately 63,000 students. Participants for the study were selected based on the comparable schools list (see Appendix A). This list provides a grouping of all elementary schools within a particular school division; the schools are grouped based on a cluster analysis that allows the school

division to group based on a combination of elements. The following student data elements at the school level were included in the analysis: gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English learner status, student stability, special education status, and gifted status. Elementary school principals received an email informing them about the research and asked them to submit names of first year teachers (see Appendix B). The selection of the population was a convenience sample based on principals who allowed me access to their schools and the number of available new teachers from comparable schools.

Data Collection, Processing, and Analysis

Participants were deemed eligible for the research based on principal acknowledgement of their first year of teaching. I submitted an application to conduct research to the school division and the proposal was approved. Each principal was contacted to provide consent for communication between me and the first-year teacher. Principals were asked to provide the names of only new K-5th grade teachers. All communication was conducted via email. The participants were informed of their consent regarding the research via the survey that was sent through email.

The participants were guaranteed that the researcher would take reasonable steps to keep information private, such as questionnaire responses. The researcher removed identifiers from all identifiable information collected. The researcher assigned each participant a pseudonym; the researcher was the only one with access to the pseudonym and the participant's original responses. The participants' names/pseudonyms were kept in a secure Google Drive folder that only the researcher had access to. The participants were provided the survey questionnaire via email and they were asked to complete it within ten school days.

Information from the survey data was compiled, categorized, and synthesized for meaning. Hayes and Singh (2012) described actively analyzing findings into developing a pattern of codes and themes. The inductive procedures in this research were focused on my research questions. I reviewed the questionnaire responses in a cyclical act through several rounds of coding the data. The coding was done in an "organic way in which coding, codes, and data shaped each other" (Saldana, 2021, p. 12). I looked for trends and relied on the responses to shape the codes and themes. I coded the questionnaire responses, selecting four categories to be the focus of the research and then detailing additional sub-categories using emergent coding (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An analyst triangulation was completed as Dr. Jori Beck assisted in co-analyzing 10% of the data. Through this triangulation, we only found a few minor discrepancies and we coded to 100% agreement. This analyst triangulation allowed for stronger reliability of the results.

When analyzing the responses of the participants, I used numerical data as part of the analysis of the data. Using numbers in qualitative research is controversial and it is important for me to justify the use of numerical data. Becker (1990) and Hammersley (1992) argued that using numbers in qualitative research gives researchers precision in their statements, including frequency, amount, or typicality of a particular phenomenon. It also contributes to the internal generalizability of the study (Maxwell, 1992). Through using numbers and percentages, I provide numerical data about the distribution or number of times a particular statement was shared (Maxwell, 2010)

Role of the Researcher

In any study, it is important that the researcher shares the experiences and background that they bring to the study. As I continue to grow as both an educator and a researcher, I am

beginning to have a general understanding of the impact of my life experiences on my personal and professional world. I am a female educator who has spent her entire life in the surrounding area of the SSD and has spent her entire educational career (13 years) in elementary schools within the SSD.

The beginning of my career was spent as a third grade teacher in a Title 1 school. As a first year teacher, I felt prepared to enter the educational field. I had graduated from The College of William and Mary and assumed that my student teaching and coursework had prepared me. I was not prepared to struggle to keep my head above water. My first year was extremely difficult. There were tears. There was laughter. There was exhaustion. There was frustration from lack of support. Most importantly, there was an intrinsic motivation and love for my first group of students that I will never forget. As an individual and first year teacher, I quickly realized that in order for me to be successful I needed several things: support, awareness, professional development, and training. I knew fairly quickly that I wanted to make a difference in education, but did not plan on being a career teacher. I started working on my masters in Educational Leadership. After graduation, I was hired as an elementary assistant principal. I spent five years in that role and was promoted to my current role of elementary principal.

Based on my experiences in my career and through my doctoral work, I am interested in teacher retention and the so-called mass exodus of teachers. The teacher shortage has dated back for decades. Today, due to the pandemic and lack of compensation, the teacher shortage has been exacerbated. As a researcher, I am interested in the analysis of the effect of mentorship programs on teachers in the first years of their careers. I would like to delve further into the impact of the amount of support received and the relationship between the mentor/mentee on the retention of teachers within their first years.

Researcher Bias

As the researcher, I acknowledge my own implicit biases and potential blind spots. I acknowledge that biases, personal judgements, and expectations are minimized as much as possible during the time of the research (Mertler, 2016). My current school division has a mentorship program that is run through a school division department. Administrators are required to follow the guidelines for the mentorship program. The current program is the same mentorship program that I participated in when employed by the school division. There could also be resulting blind spots if new teachers for the research were selected from the school where the researcher is currently an administrator. To avoid undue coercion, I did not select any teachers from my own school. I also want to acknowledge that I am making the assumption that the new teachers selected for the research are successful in their classrooms.

Maxwell (2013) shares that "without a clear sense of the goals of your research, you are apt to lose your focus and spend your time doing things that won't contribute to your goals" (p. 219). I conducted this research for personal goals that include becoming more informed about an existing situation and to advance my career.

Limitations

There were several threats to both internal and external validity in this study. Self-reporting and survey research design often have flaws due to social desirability or misunderstanding of the questions. Also, the questionnaires were not completed in a controlled setting, and this could lead to issues with validity. When filling out a questionnaire or survey, validity can be compromised because humans have the desire to show themselves in a positive light. A significant concern as a limitation was the difference of mentoring across the different elementary schools. As previously stated, in the SSD, every new teacher is required to have a

mentor and they are required to document monthly meetings between the mentor/mentee. However, some schools offer additional support to the new teachers. This support includes but is not limited to: coaching cycles, learning walks, feedback, etc.

A final limitation was the idea of collecting longitudinal data. This research was designed to be conducted throughout the teacher's first year. Teacher retention is typically discussed in regards to the first three to five years of teaching. This study has the potential to be more powerful and generalizable if I collected data over a longer period of time. Future directions would include conducting a longitudinal study with a much larger sample size.

Scholarly Significance

This study on the mentorship program in the SSD is significant because it is very clear that effective teaching leads to effective learning. To develop effective teachers, it is believed that effective mentorship is required. A review of the literature has shown that mentoring is often identified as a crucial step in achieving career success and in sustaining employees. Due to the teacher shortage, it is imperative that school districts work to decrease teacher attrition.

In an analysis of current practice and conditions of mentor programs, the mentor teacher often felt unprepared for the mentoring role (Callahan, 2015). They received little to no specific preparation for their role as a mentor. The majority of mentors in studies are veteran teachers who have had little professional development on mentoring, coaching, or providing effective feedback to preservice teachers or new teachers. Mentor teachers also report that they are often asked to provide feedback to mentees on observations without being provided training. Therefore, the feedback comes in different forms: praise and criticism, advice or telling mentees what to do, and correction. They feel they provide directive feedback, which leaves little space

for the mentee to dialogue with the mentor teacher and allow for reflection on their own beliefs and practices (Greeter et al., 2015).

Conclusion

If we expect new teachers to succeed and to remain in the education field, it is important that schools provide them with unprecedented levels of support. Through this research, the perceptions of new teachers in the SSD were gathered and analyzed. The responses from the participants allowed for an analysis of the support that teachers are provided through the current mentorship program. In the following chapter, I will present the results of the new teacher questionnaire and review the perceptions of the new teachers.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the mentoring experiences of elementary teachers in their first year of teaching. In this study, I provide a description and summary of feedback provided by first year teachers including circumstances that they think positively influence the mentor-mentee relationship. I intended to describe the relation between these factors and the influence on the retention of new teachers. In this chapter, the results and findings are presented and the following research questions are addressed:

1. What influence does a mentorship program have on the perception of new elementary teachers across their first year of teaching?
2. What factors positively impact the mentor/mentee relationship?

Summary of Data Collection

In Chapter 3, I detailed the methods used for data collection for this qualitative study. The study was designed as a structured questionnaire to provide me with perceptions of the new teachers (Maxwell, 2013). For the current study, I used convenience sampling in which the participants were selected based on convenience for the researcher. As an employee of the Sunshine School District[1] (SSD), I was able to use the comparable schools list (Appendix A) to reach out to principals directly to inquire about names for the research. I solely focused on comparable schools groups #3 and #5. I reached out directly to principals via email (Appendix B). From there, I emailed 26 new teachers directly through their school email account (Appendix C). Teachers were asked to respond to a survey via Google Form. I was able to secure 15 first year teachers as the participants in this research study.

[1] All names of people and places are pseudonyms

Once teachers had responded, I provided each participant a summary of my analysis of their submission via email. This member-checking process allowed me to validate their answers, as well as answer any follow-up questions that presented themselves during analysis (Saldana, 2021). When provided with this member check, 7 out of 15 participants (47%) responded with a confirmation or to clear up any misconceptions from their responses.

In the following sections, I have provided a brief introduction to the participants to contextualize the findings. These responses are not direct quotes, but instead are a summary of their answers. Then, I present a synthesis of the data organized into themes. Theme one addressed research question one: What influence does a mentorship program have on the perception of new elementary teachers across their first year of teaching? All four of the themes together directly addressed research question two: What factors positively impact the mentor-mentee relationship?

PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS

Riley

Riley is currently a 2nd grade teacher who is completing her student teaching experience while employed by the school division. She felt prepared for her career. She wishes her teacher preparation program had included more information on classroom management, more realistic expectations about lesson planning, and more up-to-date information on small group instruction especially with literacy. She has 2 mentors: one assigned by her administration and one assigned through Title I. She has a great connection with her mentor; her mentor has observed her and provided positive feedback. She has not observed her mentor. She struggles with the relationship with the Title I mentor as this seems forced and they have different communication styles. She

has another strong relationship with the reading coach in her building. She wished that there was more accountability for the mentors and that New Teacher Orientation was shorter.

Maria

Maria is currently a 2nd grade teacher. She did her student teaching within the district that she is currently employed and had a strong cooperating teacher; she felt prepared for her first year of teaching. She wished she had learned more about time management. She has a mentor who was selected by her administration. She meets daily with her mentor and they had an instant connection. She has observed her mentor every few months. She finds this powerful because it gives her more insight on how a more seasoned teacher handles situations in the classroom. Her mentor has observed her and provided her with specific feedback. She also has a connection with the School New Teacher Liaison and can ask her anything. She does not have any feedback for New Teacher Orientation. In the member check, she provided additional feedback that the New Teacher Orientation was helpful. They gave tidbits about how to make math engaging such as using manipulatives and differentiation. They also had a course on classroom management, which she found helpful.

Kelly

Kelly is currently a Kindergarten teacher. She had a strong student teaching experience in a third grade classroom. She felt very prepared for teaching because she had spent eight years previously as a kindergarten teacher assistant. She wished she had learned more about dealing with difficult behaviors in the classroom in her teacher preparation program. She has a mentor who was selected by her administration. She meets daily with her mentor; they have a strong relationship because she was the mentor's assistant previously. She has not observed her mentor

while teaching, but she did observe her while working as her assistant. She has enjoyed having access to a mentor to help with her classroom.

Terry

Terry is currently a 1st grade teacher. She felt prepared entering the classroom based on previous experiences in another state and at a daycare center. The week before school started, she was switched from kindergarten to first grade. This presented some challenges. She had a strong student teaching experience and her cooperating teacher gave her many opportunities to teach. She wished her teacher preparation program had given her more experience with students with problematic behaviors and having difficult conversations with parents/students. She has not been assigned a mentor, but has relationships with her grade level and building level coaches. She would love the opportunity to observe if she had a mentor. She has strong relationships with special education teachers from another district and they have helped her with discipline/behavior questions.

Polly

Polly is currently a 5th grade teacher. She felt very prepared entering the classroom because she had a strong student teaching experience with a rough classroom. Her cooperating teacher would often leave her in charge with no guidance. She eventually ended up fully student teaching in the classroom while working when the teacher left. She has a mentor assigned to her; the mentor is the grade level chair. Polly said her mentor was "kinda" helpful and they meet once a week. She has not had the opportunity to observe her mentor and her mentor has not observed her to provide feedback. Two additional employees from the school district who have supported her through her first year of teaching; one of them is the School New Teacher Liaison.

Patricia

Patricia is currently a 3rd grade teacher. She felt prepared entering the classroom because she had some previous experience working in a preschool program and kindergarten classes. She felt like her teacher prep program helped her learn how to connect with different types of students. However, she also felt like her teacher preparation program did not prepare her emotionally and mentally for the daily grind of being a teacher. She was not prepared for the amount of time that is required outside of school hours. She has a mentor assigned to her; they are a good connection because they are both outgoing people and she has a lot of experience. She feels like her mentor was more helpful in the beginning of the year. Her mentor often is overwhelmed with the demands of her own classroom and overlooks her. They try to meet once a week, but it does not always happen. She has only been able to observe her mentor one time for 20 minutes. Her mentor does provide her feedback. She feels supported by her family. She likes the Mentoring Program because it provides guidance to new teachers. She wishes the Mentoring Program included training for mentors to ensure that they were willing to make the time commitment and provide them information on what they should be discussing.

Holly

Holly is currently a 1st grade teacher. When entering the classroom, she felt prepared for the content instruction and lesson planning. She is confident that she can teach an engaging lesson. She did not feel prepared for behavior management. Her student teaching was a different experience; she spent part of it in an Early Childhood Special Education classroom, then finished doing a long-term sub job in a 2nd grade classroom. This gave her a ton of experience because she did not have a cooperating teacher. She felt that her teacher preparation program prepared her for the lesson planning and instruction piece; she was not prepared for the plethora of behaviors that she sees daily in her classroom. She has a mentor, and they have similar

personalities. She talks to her mentor throughout the day and has observed her once. Her mentor has given her feedback, especially with small group instruction. Her mentor provides her feedback in a positive manner without overstepping. She also feels supported by her administration and School New Teacher Liaison. Holly feels like the mentoring program is successful and gives her someone to talk to about the daily struggles, beyond just becoming a better teacher.

Gale

Gale is a special education teacher who works with 4th graders. She is currently teaching on a provisional license and has only taken one special education course. She worked as a teacher assistant prior to being hired and did not complete student teaching. She did not feel prepared for the paperwork including how to write and analyze IEPs for students. She has a mentor; she thinks they are a good match because the mentor is organized and knowledgeable. She is able to meet daily with her mentor, but has not had the opportunity to observe her mentor because of lack of time. She has a strong relationship with another special education (SPED) teacher at her school, plus other SPED teachers at her previous school. She likes the mentoring program because she thinks it is nice to have someone to talk to when she has exhausted all of her options. She thinks mentors need more support to not feel burnt out by supporting the new teachers.

Caleb

Caleb is a physical education teacher to 2nd and 3rd grade students. He felt like his teacher preparation program was helpful, but it was also a struggle because it was during the COVID-19 pandemic. With online classes, it was difficult to get a true picture of the daily regimen and requirements of teaching. He did not work with "real" students until his student

teaching. He wished his preparation program prepared him with less lesson-planning and more assistance with behavior management strategies. Caleb has a mentor assigned to him (a reading specialist). They talk 1-2 times a week, but it is difficult to discuss concerns due to the differences between their job responsibilities. His spouse is a teacher; it is helpful to him to have someone to talk to. Caleb is not sure what his future holds; his first year has proven difficult.

Kris

Kris is currently a 4th grade teacher. Kris feels like his teacher preparation program prepared him educationally, but he was not prepared for all of the nuances that it takes to open a classroom as the teacher of record. His student teaching experience was strong, but he wishes he was given more freedom to take things over and do them his own way. His program prepared him for lesson planning, teaching, and the educational components; however, it did not prepare him for behaviors and how to successfully manage his own classroom. He has an assigned mentor who is a 5th grade teacher. Her classroom is nearby and she is always there to help. He meets with his mentor weekly and has observed her one time. His mentor provides him feedback on observations from his principal. He has the support of his wife, who is also a teacher in the same district and has more experience. The mentorship program has been beneficial to him because he likes having someone to ask questions and build a strong relationship with. He does plan on remaining in education, but he is considering possibly looking at a different district due to lack of support (not involving his mentor).

Haden

Haden is a special education teacher. She felt unprepared for her first year of teaching due to lack of knowledge about IEP writing and two weak student teaching experiences that did not provide her with any feedback. She did feel prepared for collecting data after one class in her

program. She went to the New Teacher Orientation program that the school division offers. She felt that this program was an overload of information and there was not enough detail in the special education trainings. Haden has a mentor assigned to her and they have a good relationship. Her mentor takes time to answer her questions and always ensures she has clarity. She meets weekly with her mentor, but talks to her throughout the week informally. Her mentor is assigned to another school; they have not had the chance to observe each other because of this. She wished that there was time allocated within the New Teacher Program for mentors and mentees to meet more frequently, such as on in-service days.

Sam

Sam is currently a 2nd grade teacher. He felt prepared for classroom management, but did not feel prepared for the extra requirements of teaching including working at home constantly. He did not complete student teaching; he was a site assigned sub and a teacher assistant prior to his first year. He has a mentor, but she is not in his professional learning community group. His mentor is helpful in reminding him of due dates, relieving stress, and other details. They do not meet formally, only quick chats here and there. Sam has not had the opportunity to observe his mentor. He does have the support of his spouse, who is also a teacher at the same school. He feels like the New Teacher Mentoring Program is helpful for reminders and tips and tricks. He wishes that mentors were selected and assigned more carefully. He also shared that some of the meetings after school could be designed to be more beneficial. Overall, he wishes mentors were given more time to coach effectively and remove non-essential meetings.

Whitney

Whitney is currently a 4th grade teacher. She felt prepared for entering the classroom, but struggled with management of the curriculum and she relied heavily on support from her grade

level. She feels like her student teaching prepared her, but she would have liked more experiences diving into the curriculum and finding aligned resources. She has a mentor assigned to her. They have a good relationship and they meet monthly. Sometimes it can be difficult because they do not teach the same subjects. She has not observed her mentor; her mentor observed her once and gave her feedback on classroom management. She has the support of the New Teacher Liaison and feels like the mentoring program is helpful because it helps her build a professional network.

Samantha

Samantha is currently a 4th grade teacher. She did not feel as prepared for entering the classroom as she would have liked, but she feels like her mentor has helped with this. She had a great student teaching experience, but stated that it was just much easier than teaching is in actuality. The workload, expectations, and classroom behaviors were much easier to manage during student teaching. She has a great relationship with her mentor and feels like her mentor is her biggest cheerleader. She has not had the opportunity to observe her mentor, but her mentor has observed and modeled groups for her. The mentoring program has been helpful in getting organized, prepared, setting up her room for day one, building her confidence, and more. She also has the support of the New Teacher Liaison and felt this was truly beneficial.

Aria

Aria is currently a 3rd grade teacher. She is a first year general education teacher, but has taught special education previously. She did not feel as prepared for her first year teaching because of struggles with classroom management and learning the different teaching styles and requirements in a new district. She feels like she had a strong student teaching experience, but her schools were much different than the school that she works at. She has a mentor assigned to

her and they have a good relationship. She meets with her mentor 1-2 times a week and they discuss curriculum and other things. She also has a support system outside of her mentor, including her building administration, who have provided her with assistance all year. She wishes the New Teacher Mentoring program provided more opportunities for new teachers to meet prior to the start of the school year to preload some of the new teacher information.

Thematic Synthesis

Four themes were identified as being either positive or negative aspects of the mentoring process. The themes were identified with an inductive approach that included identifying patterns in the data. “Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis” (Patton, 1980, p. 306). These themes were: (a) positive mentor support, (b) support system, (c) influence of teacher preparation program and induction program, and (d) intricacies of the education profession. A summary and description of each theme is described in Table 2. Table 3 provides a matrix of dominant themes across participant survey responses. Through the context of this next section, I provide a description of each theme and a matrix for each participant who expressed that theme in their survey response. This section is divided into 4 sub-sections, with direct narratives from the survey to contextualize the theme.

Table 2

Summary and Description of Themes

Theme	Description
Positive Mentor Support	This theme encompassed the positive relationships between mentor and new teacher, as depicted from the new teacher's perspective. It included feedback, observations, relational aspects, etc.
Support System	This theme encompassed the new teacher's depiction of another form of support different from their mentor. This included any person who provided support from spouse to employer.
Influence of Teacher Preparation Program and Teacher Induction Program	This theme encompassed the feedback provided around positive and/or negative responses about the new teacher's preparation and induction programs. The participants had a wide range of programs, including but not limited to: student teaching experience, provisional licensure, undergraduate courses, and career switcher programs.
Intricacies of the Education Profession	This theme encompassed the feedback that was provided around the unknown aspects of school that the participants mentioned. This includes but is not limited to: classroom management, difficulties with behaviors, paperwork, amount of time working outside of contractual hours, etc.

Table 3

Matrix of Dominant Themes Across Participant Survey Responses

	Positive Mentor Relationship	Support System	Influence of Teacher Preparation Program and Teacher Induction Program	Intricacies of the Educational Profession
Riley	X	X	X	
Maria	X	X		
Kelly	X		X	X
Terry		X	X	X
Polly	X	X	X	X
Patricia	X	X	X	X
Holly	X	X	X	X
Gale		X		X
Caleb		X	X	X
Kris	X	X	X	X
Haden	X	X	X	X
Sam		X	X	X
Whitney	X	X	X	X
Samantha	X		X	X
Aria	X	X	X	X
% Agreement	11/15 = 73%	13/15 = 87%	13/15 = 87%	13/15 = 87%

Numerical Data in Qualitative Research

Table 3 provides a matrix of the dominant themes across the participant's survey responses. When coding, I analyzed the themes with the descriptions and the support of numerical data. Maxwell (2010) noted, "The use of numerical/quantitative data in qualitative research studies and reports has been controversial" (p. 475). Sandelowksi and colleagues (2009) supported the idea of "quantitizing qualitative data, stating that this is done in qualitative research to facilitate pattern recognition and otherwise to extract meaning from qualitative data, account for all data, document analytic moves, and verify interpretations" (p. 210). I share a similar belief to Maxwell (2010) that there are legitimate and valuable uses of numbers in qualitative research. In the next four sections, I detailed the themes that emerged from the coding of the participant responses.

Theme 1: Positive Mentor Relationship

The first clear theme that emerged from the participant responses was the importance of a positive mentor relationship. All 15 of the participants answered the question about their mentor. Eleven out of 15 participants, or 73%, reported that they experienced a positive relationship with their mentor. Below (see Table 4) I have listed a few additional statistics about the mentor and mentee relationship. The participants shared a variety of experiences and relational aspects that they felt had a direct impact on their positive relationship. In their descriptions of their relationships, participants used phrases such as "great match," "instantly clicked," "extremely helpful." Participants shared information about the reasoning behind the mentor being a good match for them. Patricia shared,

> I believe she was a good match for me because she is very knowledgeable and has been teaching for many years. We are also very outgoing people and connect well together.

> My mentor provided me with a lot of advice, ideas as well as strategies for behaviors in the classroom.

The participants also related their experiences back to the mentor's ability to provide time for them to have both formal and informal meetings, provide feedback for them on both minor and major obstacles, and provide time for observations during the school day. Holly shared the following about the power of informal meetings with her mentor: "My mentor is extremely helpful! During the summer, my mentor messaged me on Facebook introducing herself and lent me a helping hand." Haden explained the following about her mentor relationship:

> Yes I feel that my mentor was a good match for me. She is very good at explaining things in a way that makes sense to me instead of fancy jargon that veteran teachers know! She also always listens to my problems and provides advice on how to improve. I also love how she answers questions quickly and if I'm still confused she explains it differently or will call or Zoom to clarify what she means.

The central idea around the first theme supports the idea that teachers who had a positive relationship with their mentor felt that their mentor influenced their first year of teaching.

Table 4

Numerical Data About the Mentor-Mentee Relationship from the Survey Results

- 14 out of 15 participants currently had a mentor assigned to them.
- 14 out of 15 participants will have their mentor assigned to them for the full school year.
- 13 out of 15 participants had their mentor assigned to them by their building level administrator.
- 1 out of 15 participants had the mentor request to work with the new teacher. This relationship was already established due to a student teaching placement.
- 11 out of 15 participants were paired with a teacher on their current grade level.
- 3 out of 15 participants had a mentor assigned to them who was on a different specialty and/or grade level.

Theme 2: Support System

The second theme that emerged from the participant responses was the reliance on an additional form of support other than the mentor. While this is not clearly related to the concept of mentoring, there was a question in the survey that directly coincided with the concept of a support system. This question asked: Is there anyone in your professional life (outside of your mentor) who helps support your development? There was an additional follow up question that asked: If yes, who is this person and briefly describe your relationship. Thirteen out of the 15 participants responded that they had the support of an additional person. This equated to 87% of the new teachers demonstrating some additional level of support.

In their responses, the participants mentioned a wide range of people who have acted in this support role for them. Four out of 15 participants described their family and/or spouse as their role model. For those who described their spouses, they described a spouse who either worked in their current school or also worked in the SSD. For example, Kris shared, "my wife is an amazing teacher in the district who I rely on often for ideas." Patricia shared that "my whole family supports me by encouraging and motivating me every day."

The participants explained that it was helpful to have someone in a similar position as themselves to talk to, bounce ideas off of, vent, etc. Another participant, Riley, described her relationship with her reading coach. She shared that: "they worked closely together. She is my on-site mentor for grad school. She is incredible and has given me all the tools I need to succeed with my reading instruction and gives invaluable advice in other areas as well."

Four out of 15 participants mentioned the Teacher Retention Liaison as their support person. In the 2022-2023 school year, the SSD hired one person as the Teacher Retention Liaison. This person's sole responsibility is to support new teachers to the SSD and provide them

with resources and assistance. For example, Holly shared this quote about the Teacher Retention Liaison:

> The elementary retention liaison has been one of the biggest supports towards my development as a new teacher. She has reached out to me to make sure that I'm doing ok and has honestly been there for me more than I think the job requires. I can honestly say, I don't think I would have made it this far without her.

Another teacher, Whitney, wrote, “the teacher retention liaison checks in with me frequently and has come in to help out and offer support and advice on a regular basis. I feel comfortable asking her questions and expressing any concern I have.”

Finally, 4 out of 15 participants explained that they feel their additional level of support came from their administration. This included either their principal, assistant principal, or administrative assistant. As an example, Aria explained that “my principal has been very helpful supporting me in creating routines in my classroom and bettering my classroom management skills. He also has changed my viewpoint of holding students accountable.” As another example, Holly explained:

> My principal has also been extremely supportive and knows just the right balance of correction and praise. I had the opportunity to chat with her after an observation and she shared some ideas/improvements but also gave me the time to share any concerns or struggles. It was great to have such a great conversation with my higher-up.

The teachers who reported having the additional support of a strong support system depicted strong experiences within their first year of teaching.

Theme 3: Influence of Teacher Preparation Program and Teacher Induction Program

An analysis of the participant responses led to the discovery of a third theme, the impact of teacher induction programs. Again, while this is clearly not directly related to the mentorship experience, the participants gauged this as a factor that contributed to their success in their first year of teaching. This provides alignment to research question two: What factors positively impact the mentor-mentee relationship? Thirteen out of 15 of the participants discussed the influence of their teacher preparation program and teacher induction program on their experience. The important aspect to note with the synthesis of this theme is that the term *influenc*e does not denote a positive or negative experience. The participants noted both positive and negative experiences with their induction program. Table 5 provides a further analysis of their experiences.

Table 5

Numerical Data About the Induction Program from the Survey Results

- 13 out of 15 participants discussed the influence of their teacher induction program on their experience.
- The remaining 2 out of the 15 participants who did not discuss their teacher induction program were licensed provisionally through the state.
- 7 out of the 13 participants felt that they had a strong student teaching experience, which they contributed to making them stronger teachers in their first year.
- 6 out of the 13 participants discussed a negative or weak student teaching experience, which they contributed to struggles in different aspects of their first year.

For positive experiences, 7 out of the 13 participants who discussed the influence of their teacher preparation programs, including student teaching. The 7 participants expressed that their student teaching was “intense” and “rough.” There were actually 2 participants who ended up student teaching without a cooperating teacher and were paid as substitutes while they were

completing their student teaching. Participants described their student teaching in detail, such as Patricia who explained:

> What specifically prepared me was experiencing and learning to teach the diverse amount of students I engaged with. The middle to upper class mostly Caucasian kindergartners and the middle to lower class mostly African American 4th graders. Each different group needs different ways and styles to have to teach them and connect with them. My teacher preparation program really helped me learn how to connect with different groups of students.

There were several participants who described negative experiences with their teacher preparation programs. Riley shared,

> I have found my teacher iteration plan to be far more laborious and unrealistic than what being in the classroom full time is actually like. The expectations are unrealistic classroom management experience, unnecessarily detailed lesson plan expectations, lack of small group reading instruction, lack of up-to-date reading programs that are based on the Science of Reading.

Finally, there was one participant who described a mixture of both positive and negative experiences. Holly shared the following:

> As for teaching the content and lesson preparation, I feel as though I was extremely well prepared. I feel confident in being able to plan and teach a lesson that is both engaging and informative. However, I do not feel like I was fully prepared for behavior management. It is impossible to prepare a future teacher for the plethora of different behaviors a new teacher may encounter.

The participants all described their teacher preparation program and/or their teacher induction program. As seen in the reflections above, there were positive or negative experiences. These experiences impacted the teacher's first year of teaching. These experiences also impacted their mentorship relationship because those with negative experiences expressed needing more support from their mentors.

Theme 4: Intricacies of the Education Profession

The fourth and final theme that was discovered as a result of coding of the participant responses was the intricacies of the education profession. This theme encompasses the responses from participants regarding items that they felt unprepared for, had to ask for assistance from mentors, or overall aspects of education that they did not know about. This theme can be broken down into two sub-themes: (a) classroom management and behaviors, and (b) time. This theme, along with the two sub-themes, helps to answer research questions one and two: What influence does a mentorship program have on the perception of new elementary teachers across their first year of teaching? What factors positively influence the mentor-mentee relationship? Thirteen out of 15 participants described some form of intricacies within education. The participants all depicted asking for mentor support and feedback when encountering these situations.

The first sub-theme is the concept of classroom management and/or classroom behaviors. Six out of 13 participants described a lack of preparation or a struggle with classroom management or behaviors in their classroom. For example, Samantha explained, "classroom behaviors were so much easier during student teaching. The cooperating teacher was there to assist." Another participant, Terry, explained: "Behaviors are so hard - how to talk and manage parents is hard. What different things to try with behaviors. How to have hard conversations with students." Holly explained, "I do not feel like I was fully prepared for behavior management. It

is impossible to prepare a future teacher for the plethora of different behaviors a new teacher may encounter."

The second sub-theme was time or lack of time. Five out of 13 participants depicted concerns with time and a lack of understanding of the amount of time required to do the job. For example, Sam shared that "I was not prepared for the extra requirements of teaching such as working at home constantly. All the paperwork and multiple resources teachers are asked to do outside of work hours. There are so many nonessential meetings." Similarly, Patricia wrote, "I was not expecting how emotionally and mentally wearing the job can be on a daily basis. As well as how much work you have to put in, outside of contract hours."

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I presented the results of an emergent coding of the participant responses from a survey questionnaire provided to 15 elementary teachers in their first year of their careers. After an analysis of their responses, four themes emerged: (1) positive mentor relationship, (2) support system, (3) influence of teacher induction program, and (4) intricacies of the education profession. Within the fourth theme, two sub-themes were discovered: (1) classroom management and behaviors, and (2) time. Based on Saldana's (2021) coding guidelines, I analyzed the participants' responses and was able to discover the four themes. Through this process, I was able to answer the following research questions:

1. What influence does a mentorship program have on the perception of new elementary teachers across their first year of teaching?
2. What factors positively impact the mentor-mentee relationship?

In the final chapter, I will provide a synthesis of the findings and their relationship to previous research. I will also provide implications for practice, policy, and research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Conclusions

In this study, I provided a description and summary of feedback provided by first year teachers about their perceptions of the mentorship program in the Sunshine School District (SSD). I described the relationships between the mentor and mentee while also depicting other factors that influenced the new teacher's first year teaching experience. In this chapter, I begin with a brief summary of the purpose of the study and summarize the study. Next, I contextualize the results found in Chapter 4 with the existing literature that was discussed in Chapter 2. I share implications for practice and future research. These implications can also be provided in an executive summary in Appendix E. I conclude with reflections on the study and how it impacts my next steps as an educator and researcher.

I have expressed that one of the most vital systemic changes needed in public education is the attraction, retention, and professional development of quality teachers that will lead to an increase in student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). Social cognitive theory, with the constructs of self-regulated learning and self-efficacy, is directly related to teacher behaviors, teacher retention, and mentorship. Teachers with positive attitudes and strong mentorship opportunities are found to have high levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Dursun, 2019). Through social cognitive theory, it can be proposed that more learning takes place when (1) teachers are able to see multiple models of teaching, (2) teacher self-efficacy is promoted, and (3) teachers have access to resources and mentoring (Schunk, 2012). The research questions that I answered in this study are as follows:

1. What influence does a mentorship program have on the perception of new elementary teachers across their first year of teaching?

2. What factors positively impact the mentor/mentee relationship?

Through an emergent qualitative research design, I used a survey questionnaire via Google Forms to gather teacher perspectives on their first year of teaching including their mentorship experience, new teacher induction programs, and more. Data from the survey were compiled, categorized, and synthesized for meaning. In doing this, I was able to analyze my findings into a pattern of themes (Hayes & Singh, 2012). Using a thematic analysis, I was able to develop four themes that emerged as either positive or negative aspects of the mentoring experience. These themes were: (a) positive mentor support, (b) support system, (c) influence of teacher induction program, and (d) intricacies of the education profession.

DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Positive Mentor Support

The first clear theme that emerged was the benefits and importance of having positive mentor support for the first-year teachers. This theme encompassed the positive relationships between mentor and new teacher, as depicted from the new teachers' perspectives. It included feedback, observations, relational aspects, etc. The new teachers shared that they felt a connection to their mentors and had developed strong relationships and bonds. The research behind mentorship programs for teachers that have proved to be successful focus on five key factors: (a) personal attributes, (b) system requirements, (c) pedagogical knowledge, (d) modeling, and (e) feedback. Kerka (1997) discussed this concept of personal skills at length, noting that it depends on a mentor's ability to use their personal and interpersonal skills to develop a relationship with their mentee. The participants described a caring and kind relationship, one in which the mentors were willing to devote precious time to answer questions, have a conversation, provide feedback, and more. This is aligned to the literature which clearly

states that it is necessary for the relationship between the mentor and mentee to become closer than other professional relationships (Gruppen et al., 2006). With this positive relationship, the growth of an effective new teacher can be endless (Ackley & Gall, 1992).

Theme 2: Support System

The concept of a support system outside of their mentor was the second theme that emerged from the analysis of the responses. This theme encompassed the new teachers' depictions of another form of support that differed from their mentor. This included any person who provides support, such as a spouse or an employer. This can be linked to Bandura's social cognitive theory and the discussions around personal and environmental determinants. Bandura's social cognitive theory emphasizes that "learning occurs in a social context, and that much of what is learned is gained through observation" (Anderman & Anderman, 2009, p. 834). His social cognitive theory is based around triadic reciprocal causation, where "person factors in the form of cognitive, affective, and biological events, behavior patterns, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bidirectionally" (Bandura, 2009, p. 266). The triadic reciprocal causation explains that an individual's behavior is influenced by personal determinants and environmental determinants. An environmental determinant is not a fixed entity. In this case, a person's support system, whether it is a spouse, an administrator, or another teacher, can play a role in impacting the teacher's motivational process and outcomes (Bandura, 1989). The teachers who expressed additional support from a spouse, administrator, or another person communicated feeling a sense of success in their first year. The people who stood in the support role for the new teacher were an environmental determinant that influenced the outcome of the teacher's first year.

Theme 3: Influence of Teacher Preparation Program and Teacher Induction

The third theme that clearly emerged from the participant responses was the influence of teacher induction and teacher preparation programs on their first year of teaching. This theme encompassed the feedback provided around positive and/or negative responses about the new teacher's induction program. The participants had a wide range of induction and preparation programs, including but not limited to: student teaching experience, provisional licensure, undergraduate courses, and career switcher programs. One of the largest reasons that teachers leave the teaching profession is due to inadequacy in their teacher preparation programs and lack of support (Warsame & Valles, 2018).

The teacher induction and teacher education landscape has drastically changed since the early 2000s. Prior to the early 2000s, candidates were likely to have completed an accredited program that included teacher education preparation (Cochran-Smith, 2001). The National Education Association (NEA; 2002) shared that in today's society, many newly-hired teachers had no teacher preparation, were new to education, or were career-switchers. The participants in this study reported either positive or negative feedback on their teacher induction and preparation program. The participants who had a stronger student teaching experience and/or teacher preparation program felt more prepared for their first year of teaching. The teachers who did not report a strong induction or preparation program or reported a negative experience appeared to express more concern and struggle within their first year of teaching. They were more reliant on mentors for support. Ingersoll (2014) found that teachers who were enrolled in a traditional educator program were less likely to leave after their first year than those who entered through an alternative program. There are strong ties between pedagogy and attrition. Therefore, the

teachers who reported a strong induction or preparation program struggled less within their first year and required less support from their mentor. Because of this, the influence of the teacher induction program and teacher preparation program was shared as a factor for influencing their first year.

Theme 4: Intricacies of the Education Profession

The fourth and final theme that emerged from the analysis of the responses was the intricacies of the education profession. This theme encompassed the feedback that was provided around the unknown aspects of the profession that the participants mentioned. This includes but is not limited to: classroom management, difficulties with behaviors, paperwork, amount of time spent working outside of contractual hours, etc. In chapter 4, these areas were divided into two sub-themes. Many teachers cite pay as the biggest reason for leaving the profession, while including student behaviors, lack of support from administration, and time spent outside of contractual hours (Gordon & Lowrey, 2017). Other teachers share stories of lack of resources, concerns with managing pacing, and concerns with student engagement (McCabe, 2006). Callahan (2015) wrote:

> In addition, studies have shown that mentoring programs afford new teachers the ability to perform at higher levels in aspects of teaching, such as keeping students on task, developing effective lesson plans, utilizing appropriate questioning techniques, adjusting classroom activities to meet student interests, cultivating a positive classroom environment, and establishing successful classroom management. (p. 9)

Callahan showed a linkage between mentoring programs and assisting with lesson planning, curriculum, classroom management, etc. These things all take up a new teacher's valuable time and can require the employee to work outside of contractual hours. These intricacies are

mundane aspects of the job that first-year teachers will always need the support of a mentor to complete. The influence of the intricacies of the education profession coupled by the fact that most of them are unknown prior to starting their careers in education are a negative factor that influence the mentorship program. It requires additional time, energy, and focus for the mentor to assist the new teacher with these details.

Implications For Practice

Results of this study have the potential to have an impact on the field of education and the mentorship practices of school divisions. This study can be used to understand the importance of the mentorship program and the importance of the selection of the mentor. The themes presented were: (a) positive mentor support, (b) support system, (c) influence of teacher induction program, and (d) intricacies of the education profession. Each of these themes presents implications for practice for public school education.

The first theme emphasizes the importance of positive mentor support. School divisions and school administrators need to have a complete understanding of the importance of the mentor in the role of teacher retention and support of a teacher in their first year. Mentoring programs need to be revised (if necessary) to give administrators the selection of the mentors based on personal attributes and work habits. Administrators need leeway to analyze teacher induction and preparation programs prior to assignment of mentors. Moving forward, an emphasis needs to be placed on, first, building the relationship between the mentor and new teacher. With the current teacher shortage, the requirements of the profession, and the exhausted-state of teachers, there is the possibility that securing an adequate number of mentors could be difficult. School divisions should spend time analyzing supplemental funds (if applicable) to support and recruit effective mentors.

The second theme was the support system and the role that having an additional layer of support can play in a new teacher's educational career. School districts need to put systems in place that allow teachers the time to connect with employees outside of their typical sphere of influence. For example, the SSD has hired 2 teachers to serve as School Teacher Retention Liaisons. The sole role of these teachers is to support first year teachers and recruit strong candidates for teaching. By providing an additional layer of support to new teachers outside of their mentor, school districts will positively influence a new teacher's first year experience.

The third theme was the influence, whether positive or negative, of the teacher induction program or teacher preparation program on the new teacher's first year. Public school districts and administrators need to be cognizant of the teacher's preparation program, as well as the research behind the success and retention rates based on their preparatory program. This level of awareness is beneficial to have a better understanding of how much or how little additional support a new teacher will need in their first year. This would be beneficial to also share with the mentor of the new teacher.

The fourth and final theme was the intricacies behind the education profession. This is a huge implication for practice because administrators in schools and in central office need to be aware of the struggle with socialization into the teaching profession. School divisions and administrators might consider the implementation of an entrance interview or a professional development on the intricacies of the education profession. Professional development should be provided with a focus on wellness, self-care, and organizational management. The professional development should be provided at the division-level as well as the school-level. The division-level professional development would provide information for all first-year teachers to hear based on the intricacies of the particular school division. The school-level professional

development would allow administrators to have control and influence over the information provided to the new teachers.

Implications For Research

Future research is needed to fully understand the implications of this research on public education. First, it is imperative to tease out the difference in teacher induction programs and their influence on the new teachers' perceptions of their first year. How impactful is a comprehensive teacher induction and teacher preparation program, with pedagogy classes and a complete student teaching experience? How does this influence the role that a mentor has to play in a new teacher's first year? Second, I think it would be impactful to complete a mixed methods study that analyzes the influence of the mentor when there are structured observation times and structured feedback required. This would allow for the researchers to fully provide an analysis of the benefits of observations and feedback on the mentoring experience. A third suggestion for further research is a longitudinal study that tracked the progress of new teachers over the course of 5-10 years to determine how mentors and support systems affected their retention. A fourth and final suggestion for further research is to conduct the survey with a larger group of teachers and complete semi-structured interviews, where the researcher is allowed to ask follow-up questions to dive further into a few of these subject areas. A larger group of teachers would allow for more feedback and a larger sample size.

Throughout this study, I have acknowledged that teacher turnover is at an all-time high (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). I am proposing a call to action for administrators, schools, school districts, and state boards of education. It is imperative that we begin evaluating our support in place for new teachers. We need to be prepared to offer as much positive support as possible for new teachers. This research demonstrates the importance of mentorship for new teachers, along

with several other important factors. A drastic change is required in the level of support required in order to retain high-quality teaching candidates.

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Appendix A

List of Comparable Sunshine District Elementary Schools for the 2022-2023 School Year

Comparable Group #1	Comparable Group #2	Comparable Group #3	Comparable Group #4
Centerville	Arrowhead	Birdneck	Creeds*
Christopher Farms	Brookwood	Luxford	John B. Dey
New Castle	Corporate Landing	Pembroke*	Kingston
Ocean Lakes*	Fairfield*	Thalia	North Landing
Rosemont Forest	Indian Lakes	White Oaks	Princess Anne
	King's Grant	Windsor Oaks	Red Mill
	Pembroke Meadows		Strawbridge
	Providence*		Thoroughgood
	Woodstock		Three Oaks
			Trantwood

Comparable Group #5	Comparable Group #6	Comparable Group #7	Comparable Group #8
Bettie F. Williams	Bayside	Alanton	Glenwood
College Park	Green Run	Hermitage*	Kempsville Meadows*
Diamond Springs	Holland	Kempsville*	Landstown
Newtown	Lynnhaven	Linkhorn Park	Salem
Parkway*	Point O'View	Malibu	Tallwood*
Seatack*	Rosemont	Shelton Park	
		Windsor Woods	
		W. T. Cooke*	

*Change in comparable group from the 2021-2022 school year.

A Cluster Analysis was used to determine the comparable school groups based on a combination of data elements. The following student data elements at the school level were included in the analysis: gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, limited English proficiency, student stability, special education status, and gifted status.

Appendix B

Email to Principals

Principals,

Hi everyone! I am in the beginning stages of my dissertation research through Old Dominion University in their Curriculum and Instruction doctoral program. The topic for my dissertation is "The Influence of Mentorship on K-5 General Education Teachers: A Study of Southeastern Schools in Virginia." I am interested in recruiting 15 first year teachers in a group of comparable schools.

You are receiving this email because I selected comparable school group #3 from the newly updated comparable school list. The process will be rather simple. Once I receive names from you, I will reach out to the new teachers to gain consent for administering a questionnaire regarding how the mentoring program is perceived by the participants.

When you have a moment, please submit the names of any first year K-5 teachers at your school. This does not include special education teachers. This does not include any instructional coaches or specialists.

https://forms.gle/mCwcaqSahwRn9LJQ8

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Thanks!

Ryan

APPENDIX C

Email to Participants

Dear TEACHER NAME,

Good evening! I received your name and information from your principal. They have given permission for you to participate in a research study that I am conducting for my dissertation. You can also review the attached letter of approval from VBCPS. The topic for my dissertation is "The Influence of Mentorship on K-5 General Education Teachers: A Study of Southeastern Schools in Virginia." You were selected for participation because you are currently in the first year of your teaching career.

As a fellow educator and principal in Virginia Beach, I completely understand that your time is priceless. I hope that you will consider taking a few additional minutes of your time to complete my questionnaire about the mentoring program in our school district and the support that you have/have not received from your mentor. Please be sure to read the consent portion at the beginning of the questionnaire. This assures you that your information is confidential. You will also be awarded a $10 Amazon Gift Card for participation (at completion).

Please click here to fill out the questionnaire: https://forms.gle/Sx1e8B9wFFNBB5ki7

I appreciate your assistance. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email at katherine.goldburg@vbschools.com.

Thanks,

Ryan

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Google Form Survey

New Teacher Mentorship Questionnaire

You have the opportunity to participate in a study entitled The Influence of Mentorship on K-5 General Education Teachers: A Study of Elementary Schools in Virginia Beach, VA. The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES. Ryan Goldburg, principal at Pembroke Elementary School and Ph.D. student in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Old Dominion University will be conducting this study with her professor, Dr. Jori Beck. Dr. Beck will serve as the principal investigator.

Several studies have been conducted looking into the subject of teacher retention. This study will provide direct information to a single school district on the influence of mentorship on new teacher retention in a teacher's first year of their career. The school division will be able to make immediate use of the results.

If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving research of the factors that influence a new K-5, general education teacher to remain in the field of education. If you say YES, then your participation will last for 9 months at your assigned Virginia Beach City Public School. Approximately 25 new teachers will be participating in this study.

You should have completed onboarding and New Teacher Orientation with Virginia Beach City Public Schools. You should have been assigned a mentor for the duration of the 2022-2023 school year. To the best of your knowledge, you should not have been

excluded from mentoring and/or New Teacher Orientation that would keep you from participating in this study.

RISKS: If
you decide to participate in this study, you will face no risks outside of a possible breach of confidentiality and sharing of demographic information. And, as with any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS: You will be given a $10 Amazon gift card for your participation in this study. It will be sent to your email.

If the
researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

The
researchers will take reasonable steps to keep private information, such as interview responses and survey instruments confidential. The researcher will remove identifiers from all identifiable private
information collected. The researcher will assign each participant a pseudonym; the researcher will be the only one with access to the pseudonym. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications; but the researcher will not identify you. Of course, your records may be subpoenaed by court order or inspected by government bodies with oversight authority.

It is OK
for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study at any time. If you say
YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm, injury, or illness arising from this study, neither Old Dominion
University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact Dr. Jori Beck at 757-683-3392, Dr. John Baaki, the current Darden College of Education and Professional Studies IRB chair, at 757-683-5491 or jbaaki@odu.edu who will be glad to review the matter with you.

By completing the questionnaire that follows, you are agreeing to participate in the study. All participants will be given $10 Amazon gift card for completion of the survey. PLEASE COMPLETE BY FEBRUARY 15th.

kasimpso@vbschools.com (not shared) Switch account

* Required

1. Participant First & Last Name: *

Your answer

2. School of Employment: *

Your answer

3. How long have you been teaching (in months and years)? *

Your answer

4. What grade do you teach? *

- [ ] Preschool
- [ ] Kindergarten
- [ ] First Grade
- [ ] Second Grade
- [ ] Third Grade
- [ ] Fourth Grade
- [ ] Fifth Grade
- [ ] Special Education
- [ ] Specialists
- [ ] Other:

5. What grade would you like to teach? *

Your answer

5A. Why would you like to teach this grade level? *

Your answer

6. How well-prepared were you for your first year teaching in a classroom? Explain. *

Your answer

7. What was your student teaching experience like? *

Your answer

8. What specifically about your teacher preparation program prepared you for teaching? *

Your answer

9. What specifically about your teacher preparation program did not prepare you for teaching? *

Your answer

10. Why did you become a teacher? *

Your answer

11. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?

Your answer

11A. What are your strengths as a teacher? *

Your answer

11B. What are your weaknesses as a teacher? *

Your answer

12. How do you feel others view you (i.e., administrators, colleagues, and students)? Can you provide an example of why you feel that way? *

Your answer

13. Do you have a mentor? *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

14. How long will you have a mentor? *

Your answer

15. Who selected your mentor?

Your answer

16. Do/did you feel that your mentor was a good match for you? Why or why not? *

Your answer

17. Is/was your mentor helpful? Provide an example.

Your answer

18. How often did/do you meet with your mentor? *

Your answer

19. How often did you have the opportunity to observe your mentor? What did these observations entail? *

Your answer

20. What type of feedback did your mentor provide you? *

Your answer

21. What kind of training and/or professional development has been provided to you since you began teaching? *

Your answer

21A. Was this training optional or required? *

Your answer

22. Is there anyone in your professional life (outside of your mentor) who helps support your development as a new teacher? *

Your answer

22A. If yes, who is this person and briefly describe your relationship.

Your answer

23. What are the benefits of the New Teacher Mentoring program? *

Your answer

24. What could be improved about the New Teacher Mentoring program? *

Your answer

25. What is your relationship with your administrator? *

Your answer

26. What does it look like when your administrator visits your classroom (please include frequency of observations, details on feedback provided, etc.)? *

Your answer

27. Do you plan on remaining in the field of education after your first year of teaching? *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

28. If yes, will you remain at the same school or grade level? If no, what are your future plans? *

Your answer

29. Is there anything additional that you would like to add about your mentoring program or New Teacher Orientation? *

Your answer

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APPENDIX E

Executive Summary for Sunshine School District

Mentoring is often identified as a crucial step in achieving career success. To understand the importance of developing effective teachers through a mentoring process, it is pertinent to understand the current research behind teacher retention. The current education field is struggling with the hiring of elementary teachers and retaining high-quality teacher candidates. There is a shortage of teaching applicants. Alongside of this, many new teachers leave the teaching profession in their first three years. New teachers lack opportunities to grow and develop past their preservice and student teaching experience. Our current system lacks an identifiable mentorship program to provide ongoing professional development (PD) to new, elementary teachers in the first three years of their careers.

The goal of this study was to investigate the mentoring experiences of elementary teachers in their first year of teaching. This study provided a description and summary of feedback provided by first year teachers; it included circumstances that positively influence the mentor and mentee relationship while depicting influence on the teacher's first year in education. When mentors and mentees are able to form a positive relationship, the length in career span of the new teacher increases (Clark & Bynes, 2012). The overall goal of this study was to investigate new teacher mentorship programs across a school division with a specific focus on new, elementary teachers. This study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What influence does a mentorship program have on the perception of new elementary teachers across their first year of teaching?
2. What factors positively impact the mentor/mentee relationship?

This qualitative study utilized a structured questionnaire to provide the researcher with perceptions of the new teachers (Maxwell, 2013). The questionnaire was administered to 15 new elementary teachers within 2 comparable school groups via email. Data from the survey were compiled, categorized, and synthesized for meaning. Hayes and Singh (2012) described actively analyzing findings into developing a pattern of codes and themes. The inductive procedures in this research were focused on the research questions. I coded the questionnaire responses using categories, selecting one category to be the focus of the research and then detailing additional categories using emergent coding (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Four themes were identified inductively as being either positive or negative aspects of the mentoring process. These themes were: (a) positive mentor support, (b) support system, (c) influence of teacher preparation program and induction program, and (d) intricacies of the education profession. Positive mentor support and the role of an additional support system detail the importance of a mentor and support system in the first year. The third and fourth themes encompass pedagogy, practice, and the role of student teaching, as well as the unknown nuances of education including classroom and time management.

There are several implications for practice. First, the SSD needs to develop a better understanding of the support needed for teachers in their first year based on their teacher induction and preparation programs. School divisions should also place an emphasis on building relationships between the teacher and mentor. School districts need to put systems in place that allow teachers the time to connect with employees outside of their typical sphere of influence. Public school districts and administrators need to be cognizant of the teacher's preparation program, as well as the research behind the success and retention rates based on their preparatory

program. This level of awareness is beneficial to have a better understanding of how much or how little additional support a new teacher will need in their first year.

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EDUCATION

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, Current Doctoral Candidate, Expected Graduation May 2023
Doctor of Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, August 2013
Master of Science in Education in Educational Leadership

- Emphasis: Administration and Supervision PreK-12

The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, May 2009
Double Major: Bachelor of Arts, Kinesiology and Elementary Education

- Certification in Elementary Education

Organizations: Chi Omega Fraternity, Member of National Science Teachers Association, College Partnership for Kids

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Virginia Beach City Public Schools, 2019-current
Virginia Beach, VA
Principal, Pembroke Elementary School

Virginia Beach City Public Schools, 2013-2019
Virginia Beach, VA
Assistant Principal, Ocean Lakes Elementary School & Kempsville Meadows Elementary School

Virginia Beach Public Schools, 2009-2013
Virginia Beach, VA
Third Grade Elementary Teacher, Newtown Elementary School

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Member of SCOPE 12
- Member of the Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals (VAESP)
- Tidewater Zone Director of VAESP
- Board member of Virginia Beach Association of Elementary School Principals (VBAESP)
- Presenter at the VAESP Conference on “The Impact of Student-Centered Coaching on Elementary Schools”
- Presented to The School Superintendent’s Association (AASA) on “The Data-Driven Impact of Using Panorama Data for Social Emotional Learning”
- Presenter at Principal’s League for “Data-Driven Experiences for Students”
- Cohort II of Aspiring Principal’s Program