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The quality of the mentoring and induction program that beginning teachers receive has a direct effect on the development and performance of the novice teacher. In recent years there has been a wealth of research into many different aspects of the teaching profession. This new richness of material both demands and makes possible a re-examination of the beginning teacher. However, few researchers have sought to explain the perceptions of beginning teachers in relation to how they develop as a result of support and experience.

This qualitative participant observer case study set out to reflect, and develop, the attempts that are now being made to record the perceptions of the beginning teacher from the point of view of the novice teacher. This study has three broad objectives: to provide an up-to-date, readable, and wide-ranging account of the perceptions of the beginning teacher of the mentoring and induction process; to offer a guide to some of the major issues currently under discussion in the experiences of the beginning teacher; and to identify, and rectify wherever possible, some of the major deficiencies in the existing literature on the subject. The purpose of this study was to investigate how mentoring and induction programs affect new teachers' practice and dispositions. It involved evaluating whether beginning teachers perceived that they received adequate support from the school district, the school administrator and other para-professionals. Teachers were also asked whether they believed that they had developed as novice teachers as a result of support and experience.

The interview data revealed that beginning teachers desired support in the areas of classroom management, curriculum and instruction, securing resources, and discipline.

The participants also indicated that they would like additional support from the school district, the school administrator, mentors, parents and the school community.

BEGINNING TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF MENTORING AND INDUCTION

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally new teachers have been expected to sink or swim with little support and guidance. Overburdened principals charged with supervision and evaluation of all teachers, along with other responsibilities, have typically been unable to provide the intensive mentoring and oversight that novices require. In addition to the fact that this leaves new teachers with little daily help, it has also meant that decisions about continuation and tenure have typically been pro forma because they are based on little data, (Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, and Bernstein, 1984 p. 216).

Many veteran and former teachers can recall their initial years of teaching. Some did not remain in the teaching profession as they became discouraged and were unable to apply the pre-service teacher training and preparation methods into the classroom setting. Approximately one third of teachers that enter the profession leave within the first five years, and these figures are even higher within the more challenging school districts with less support systems (Darling-Hammond, 2005). However, changes in this pattern have begun to emerge as many states have implemented an induction and mentoring program for novice teachers. Although the extent of these programs vary considerably, more commonly accepted is the belief that beginning teachers need a sustained level of support as they develop their practice in the same way as doctors, nurses and engineers (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

The Beginning Teacher

Beginning teachers enter the classroom with an abundance of knowledge and skills. What must be recognized is that each new teacher arrives with a different set of

circumstances, a different background, and increasingly through alternative certification routes as opposed to the traditional teacher education route. Based upon the research of Moir (1999), beginning teachers evolve through particular stages throughout their teaching careers. Therefore, it is clear that new teachers will need a specific support structure that aligns with their individual needs.

Alternative licensure programs attract people from a variety of backgrounds, various age groups, and different genders and from a diverse set of racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Given that there are an increasing number of lateral entry teachers who enter the teaching profession having been through a career change, they are typically more mature in terms of age as compared to their traditionally trained counterparts. Frequently, alternatively prepared teachers start their teaching careers while they are completing their licensure requirements (Bartell, 2005). In addition, as they have not received the student teaching experiences of their traditionally trained counterparts, “they complete their directed teaching experience and demonstrate competence in their own classroom settings” (p. 7).

Darling-Hammond et al (2005), suggest that some “alternatives” are “indistinguishable from long-standing emergency hiring practices that fill vacancies with individuals who have not met standard teaching requirements” (p. 208). They argue that these alternatives typically consist of only a few weeks of formal training and rely heavily on on-the-job training and supervision. Yet, research of such programs typically report that this supervision rarely takes place and that many beginning teachers “learn to teach by trial and error” (p. 208).

Consequently when school districts design and implement beginning teacher induction programs they have to take into consideration that they must provide induction, training and professional development for teachers who have been trained through the traditional education routes and also for people who have no experience in the classroom whatsoever. In essence, this suggests that school districts need two distinct programs for beginning teachers depending upon which route into the teaching profession they have chosen. However due to lack of resources, time constraints, the increasing shortage of teachers and the need to place more teachers in classrooms, the induction and mentoring support that all beginning teachers are offered is often similar in nature.

School districts typically implement programs that focus on orientation and classroom management (Darling-Hammond et al. 2005). They contend that “when novices do not have adequate grounding in content teaching methods so that they can make the translations necessary for their students, they often clamor for surface level strategies to manage and discipline students who are not engaged in classroom work” (p. 216). Consequently many induction programs “address the symptoms, not the cause, of disengagement and suboptimal learning, offering a litany of workshops offering formulaic discipline strategies as a form of novice teacher triage” (p. 217).

Statement of the Problem

School districts across America offer beginning teachers some form of induction program. In many states there is a mandate that assures that each new teacher will have access to a mentor. But the question remains whether all new teachers participate in an induction process that is effective, and despite the fact that it is the intention of school

districts to allocate all beginning teachers a mentor, is this in reality what really occurs? Although there is a recognized need for collaboration and support for the beginning teacher, some educational institutions are not structured in a manner that facilitates this.

This problem is important because some beginning teachers encounter difficulties during their first years of teaching. There are some that become ill, depressed or face teacher burnout, leading some teachers to decide to abandon teaching as a profession. However, there are others who maintain an optimistic perspective; they remain resolute in their career of choice, reflect and learn from the challenging experiences they encounter, while integrating their learning into various teaching approaches and strategies. There are a number of factors that are liable to make the initial year of teaching difficult such as the responsibilities of teaching, inappropriate teaching assignments, curriculum and instructional challenges and non-supportive school cultures. It is often the types of support that teachers receive that are indicative of whether the teacher moves forward and develops his/her teaching career or chooses to leave the profession.

Purpose of the Study

In general, the purpose of this study is to add to the existing literature regarding the effectiveness of mentoring and induction programs for beginning teachers. There is a plethora of existing research regarding the mentoring and induction process; nevertheless, still missing from this vast body of these studies is the voice of the lateral entry beginning teacher - that is, the voice and perspectives of those teachers that have entered the profession through alternative licensure programs. More specifically, the purpose of this

study is to examine the support systems that are in place, working conditions, job satisfaction, the quality and quantity of professional and peer support, stress factors affecting teacher performance and satisfaction, certification routes, and the overall satisfaction with the induction process. This research is not attempting to reveal the truth based on empirical evidence but rather to present the perceptions of educators based on constructed realities.

Rationale for the Study

The first years of teaching are typically the most challenging for beginning teachers. Often novice teachers struggle to survive day-to-day (Bartell, 2005). Some of these challenges are minor in nature, whereas others have the potential to cause a new teacher to consider leaving the profession. Increasing awareness of how crucial these initial years are in retaining beginning teachers has led to more attention being paid to the mentoring and induction process of novice teachers. A review of literature offers a basis in identifying the areas in which beginning teachers need support. In addition open-ended questions were created that focused on aspects that the beginning teacher may consider when assessing how much support they perceive that as new teachers they need.

Alternative licensure programs are now offering school districts an avenue by which to fill teaching positions that are failing to be filled through traditional college programs. As most teachers that enter the teaching profession through alternative programs have not undertaken coursework in education, the experiences and opportunities provided for these teachers are varied as compared to their traditionally prepared counterparts. What is lacking for the alternatively licensed teacher is typically

the content pedagogy and the student teaching experience. As a result their educational training usually occurs at the same time that they are employed in a full-time teaching position. This suggests that the support desired by the traditionally prepared teacher as compared to the alternatively licensed teacher may indeed vary.

Given the amount of teachers that leave the profession within the first five years, this research has the potential to reveal the influencing factors, which may lead to their decision to leave the classroom or remain in the teaching profession. Thus, in identifying these factors and creating and implementing effective induction programs and support systems, there may be a way to avoid or at the very least decrease the high turnover rate of beginning teachers.

Research Questions

The following research questions were the primary research questions for the study:

1. What kinds of adequate support do beginning teachers say that they need in the induction and mentoring process? How do new teachers perceive the support that they actually receive?
2. How do beginning teachers develop as teachers as a result of support and experience?
3. How do new teachers respond to critical incidents and what support is necessary for them to respond successfully?
4. How does the support beginning teachers receive and the extent to which they develop influence their decision to stay in the teaching profession?

Research Design

Using the four research questions as a foundation, this study used a qualitative, case study research approach to reflect the beginning teacher perceptions of the mentoring and induction program within their school district. Creswell's (1998) definition of a case study is "an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p. 61). This case is a "bounded system by time (data collection) and place (a single campus)" (p. 37). A single program (within-site study) was selected for the purpose of this study.

Interviewing, observations, and field notes were the principle methods used to collect data in this study and develop an effective and comprehensive narration of the perceptions of beginning teachers of one large urban district's mentoring and induction program. Semi-structured interviews, observations and field-notes from classroom observations were utilized as data collection tools to guarantee that a reliable qualitative study was accomplished. Through these methods I as the principal researcher was able to observe, examine and analyze the specific situations and experiences of the teachers and students in the school setting.

A voice recorder was used during the interviews, but the line of questioning had to be flexible as I felt that it was not possible to follow rigid questions. I wanted the interviews to develop from stories of the participant's lives, in their own words. It became evident in the course of the interviews that if I had used structured questions valuable information would have been lost.

Three different data sources were triangulated. Taped interviews, field notes, and observations of beginning teachers were compared to note any commonalities and differences of beginning teachers' perceptions of mentoring and induction programs and how new teachers' practice and dispositions played out in the classroom.

Definition of Key Terms

The terms used in this case study have been given various definitions in the related literature. However, for the purpose of this case study it is important to clarify these key terms for the reader.

Administrators/School Administration: Central office administrators/the principal located at the Independent School.

Alternative Certification: A path that leads to teacher licensure for people who have not followed the traditional route into the teaching profession. This certification program may insist that the teacher hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree in the subject to be taught. In addition, typically individual states require that teachers take part in a variety of content pedagogy professional development activities.

Beginning Teachers/Novice Teachers/New Teachers: These terms are used interchangeably in this case study to describe people new to the teaching profession. Beginning Teacher I is used to clarify that the teacher is in his/her initial year of teaching. Beginning Teacher II is a term used to indicate a teacher who is in his/her second year of teaching.

Department of Public Instruction (DPI): The state agency of education. This institution develops and implements the curriculum, works with colleges and universities in

implementing, developing and improving teacher education programs. It is also responsible for teacher licensure.

Induction: A structured training program for beginning teachers provided by the school district. It may include orientation, explanations of policies and procedures, licensure requirements, curriculum and instruction, beginning teacher seminars and other important issues and topics for novice teachers.

Lateral Entry: This is an alternative form of certification that allows people without an education degree to follow a path into teaching and receive full licensure at the same time that they are employed as a teacher by a school district.

Mentor: A person that offers support and advice in the areas of curriculum and instruction, classroom management, lesson planning and other areas to beginning teachers. It is hoped that this person will help induct a novice teacher into the profession and assist in the development of the new teacher.

Professional Development: Defined as workshops, meetings, and seminars, which offer opportunities for teacher development in the areas of curriculum and instruction, classroom management and other subject matter. Opportunities for dialogue, sharing of ideas and teaching strategies are also provided.

Traditional Certification: The traditional 4-year route offered by colleges and universities results in a major in education degree. It includes an internship experience of student teaching, written examinations, and extensive content pedagogy.

Limitations of the Case Study

As this case study was limited to only one group of beginning teachers from one school in a large urban school district in the southeast, the generalizability of the findings is limited in scope. In addition the design of the study did not fully explore all additional sources that may have relevant information to the mentoring and induction program offered to beginning teachers.

Importance of the Case Study

My interest in this area stems from having a lived experience as a beginning teacher both in England and the United States of America. As I reflected on the mentoring and induction process that I was exposed to, I thought carefully about how the education system has evolved since then and how the curriculum changes and policies are now affecting beginning teachers. Thus, I wanted to learn more about the benefits of mentoring and induction to individual participants and the field of education.

The participants in this qualitative case study discovered and reflected on precisely what their individual needs were as a beginning teacher. This research study revealed the effectiveness of the induction and mentoring program. The research helps school districts and site based administrators make informed decisions about the types of induction, mentoring and professional development processes that are necessary for beginning teachers. In addition this research exposed the level of support necessary for beginning teachers to be successful.

Organization of the Case Study

This qualitative case study is organized and presented in seven chapters. Chapter I offers an introduction to the study. Chapter II provides a review of the literature as it relates to the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers. Chapter III describes the research design of the case study and the school setting. Chapter IV serves as an introduction to the participants. Chapter V presents the findings of this case study as the data relates to orientation, mentoring, resources, collegial support, parental support, and district level support received and desired by beginning teachers. In Chapter VI the findings relate to the realities and expectations of teaching, the unique situation of the Independent School, the development of beginning teachers', and the decision to remain in the teaching profession. Finally, Chapter VII provides conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Chapter I offered an introduction to this qualitative case study. Chapter II provides a review of the literature as it relates to the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers. The purpose of this literature review is to describe what it already known about the mentoring, induction, and support of new teachers.

There has been a growing concern about the decreasing number of teachers in public education (Murphy, DeArmond, & Guin, 2003). In addition to this shortage, there is a predicted increase of 4% in the number of school age students by 2009 (Olson, 2000). There are specific circumstances that add to the teacher shortage such as lack of administrative support, classroom management issues, poor working conditions, low pay, the aging teacher population and early retirements (Murphy et al., 2003).

The school culture is frequently linked to the isolation that is often present in schools. Brock and Grady (2001) assert that when new teachers teach in a school culture where the faculty share common goals and work collaboratively, they are more inclined to have a positive teaching experience. On the other hand, novice teachers who start their teaching careers in an unstructured environment are more likely to experience a less positive climate and even isolation.

The lack of social support that stems from isolation or a non-supportive school atmosphere is sure to affect the experiences of a beginning teacher. This in turn may lead to the teacher displaying pessimistic attitudes towards the students and thus have a negative effect on the teacher's instructional program. According to Gordon & Maxey,

(2000) there are teachers who acquire “a survival mentality, a set of restricted teaching methods, and a resistance to curricular and instructional change that may last throughout their teaching careers” (p. 8).

Moir et al (1999) suggests that the quality of the classroom teacher is the most important indicator of student learning. They believe that an induction program that focuses on beginning teacher support and classroom practice while advocating the very ideals that encouraged the teacher into the profession offers hope for today’s schools. For Fullan (1993), novice teachers enter the profession with commitment, passion and an idealistic view of teaching, determined to make a difference in the lives of their students. Yet, often they face challenging teaching assignments, inadequate working conditions, lack of resources, and isolation. Shocked by the realities of teaching, they encounter a system that fails to value its beginning teachers as one of their most precious resources. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2007) school districts must make a valuable investment in the quality of beginning teachers at the outset of their teaching career. This support needs to be sustained throughout the novice teachers’ professional career.

I have witnessed situations where the leadership within the school as well as the perceived level of trust within the school environment are indicative of the beginning teacher’s ability and eagerness to welcome feedback and embrace constructive criticism. Indeed in some cases where outside researchers and other district level administrators become part of informal observations, there is an increased level of support for beginning teachers. As Hargreaves and Fullan (1999, p. 18) point out,

After decades of assuming that teachers taught alone, learned to sink or swim by themselves and got better over time only through their own individual trial and error, there is increasing commitment to the idea and the evidence that all teachers are more effective when they can learn from and are supported by a strong community of colleagues.

From my own experiences and from my observations of beginning teachers I realize that there are numerous ways in which new teachers are able to learn from their colleagues, such as team teaching, sharing information, peer-coaching, planning sessions, informal chats in the hallway and over coffee or lunch. During my classroom observations it has become evident that beginning teachers need to feel confident enough to take risks, ask for help, stretch their limits, and share their concerns.

Hargreaves and Fullan (1999, p. 21), are keen observers of the human condition and their work bears careful reading.

Teaching is an emotional practice. It arouses colors and feelings in teachers and students. Teaching not only involves instructing students, but also caring for them, forming bonds and relationships with them. With the children of many of today's postmodern families – fractured, poor, single-parented-this burden of caring is becoming even greater. Teaching is not just about mastering a set of skills. It is a job where teachers repeatedly put their selves on the line. Times of rapid change, whether chosen or imposed, can create even greater anxiety and insecurity among many teachers as the challenge of mastering new strategies calls their competence and confidence into question...[I]t is easy to lose sight of teaching's emotional dimension, of the enthusiasm, passion, care, wisdom, inspiration, and dedication that make many teachers great.

Over the next decade U.S schools will hire approximately two million beginning teachers. A necessary component of the hiring process is that effective induction programs are implemented. This will essentially offer an opportunity to transform the

teaching profession. These programs need to nurture new teachers at the same time as promoting high standards in the classroom (Scherer, 1999).

Induction and Support for Beginning Teachers

In an attempt to recognize the novice teacher as a beginner, there must be authentic and meaningful support in place that promotes the teachers' growth and development. Scherer (1999) suggests that "beginning-teacher induction has broad-based support" (p. 3). She concurs that teacher shortages and the high attrition rates during the initial years of teaching prove attractive for induction programs that sustain teacher retention. The American Federation of Teachers (2001) has acknowledged induction as a key requirement of teacher quality. According to Berry (2004), the federal government suggests strategies such as teacher induction and professional development as an approach towards guaranteeing that highly-qualified teachers meet the expectations of the No Child Left Behind Legislation (2001) in ensuring that students make adequate yearly progress.

For Bartell (2005) induction is "a part of the career-long teacher-development continuum" that helps novice teachers become effective and assists in the retention of teachers (p. 43). Wong (2002) advocates the idea that if new teacher induction programs focus on skill development, support, and retention, lifelong learning may be sustained. Villani (2002) suggests that induction is a planned well-organized program that provides adequate resources, time, and support. Feiman-Nemser et al. (1992) concede that retention rates are indicative of the support that beginning teachers receive; however,

they argue that the paramount objective of new teacher induction is the effective development of professionals who are able to help students learn.

Mentoring

The term “mentor” comes from the literary text *Odyssey* in which a character Mentor was selected to educate and help Telemachus while his father was fighting in the Trojan War. The word has now evolved and according to Villani (2002) is defined as “a wise and trusted friend” (p. 7). Similarly the role of the mentor has evolved to comprise sponsor, protector, teacher, guide, and supporter. Bey (1995) believes that mentoring is a collaborative partnership where teachers share and develop interdependent interests. He contends that mentors act as role models that encourage, counsel and support new teachers. In the early 1980s, teacher mentoring programs developed in an attempt to reduce the rate of teacher attrition among beginning teachers. The intention was to offer new teachers an effective transition into the world of teaching, instruct mentors in the most effective methods of support of novice teachers, and develop the teaching profession (Wang & Odell, 2002). Coppola et al. (2004) insist that simply assigning mentors to work with novice teachers does not provide beginning teachers with the knowledge, skills and support they will need to be successful in the classroom. They emphasize that a multi-year induction program that offers a collegial-mentoring component and an effective professional development program that targets specific needs is necessary.

For Boreen & Niday (2003), mentoring is more than an experienced teacher supporting a novice teacher. They contend that mentoring offers a “vast array of life and

professional learning experiences that enhance their ability to interact with their colleagues in a collegial manner” (p. 15). Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon (1995) suggest that mentoring offers a way for experienced teachers to provide individualized, ongoing professional support. Feiman-Nemser, Schwill, Carver, & Yusko (1999) note that although mentoring is the most common form of support for beginning teachers, for it to be effective requires thoughtful selection, training and support of the mentor. Bartell (2005) argues that “the support and mentoring that occur in a well-designed induction program are not a substitute for strong academic preparation” (p. 15). Mentoring has been identified as a method that may be used for retaining beginning teachers and an indicator of their effectiveness in the classroom (Claycomb, 2000). Wang & Odell (2002) identified three major areas that are crucial in the beginning teacher mentoring process: (a) humanistic (assisting teachers on a personal level immerse themselves into the teaching profession); (b) apprentice (assisting beginning teachers transition into the culture of the school and help with the progress of teachers in specific contexts); and (c) critical constructivist (reconstructing teaching, asking questions and questioning current teaching practices).

Teacher Mentoring in the Urban School

Guyton & Hildago (1995) suggest that the mentoring process of beginning teachers can be affected by the culture and context of the school. They also contend that the culture of urban schools differs somewhat to that of suburban schools. Therefore, the manner in which novice teachers conduct themselves in terms of their disposition, beliefs,

and acquisition of knowledge is likely to be heavily influenced by factors that are distinctive to the urban school setting.

According to Tillman (2005), typically urban school teachers teach children of color who may not be motivated, resources may not be readily available, there may be lack of parental support, and teacher instruction may not follow the traditional methods. As a consequence mentors of teachers in an urban setting may have a very different role to play when compared to the mentors serving teachers in a primarily middle-class setting. What Claycomb (2000) suggests is that mentors within the urban context may have to help novice teachers in acknowledging and dealing with the challenges posed by teaching students from poverty who frequently require that their teachers advocate for them socially, academically and emotionally. Tillman (2005) also concurs that “teacher mentors in urban schools may also be called upon to help new teachers reflect on and understand the unique histories and experiences and the varied learning styles and needs of students from various racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups” (p. 612).

Administrative Support

Tillman (2005) acknowledges the role of the teacher mentor but also indicates that the role of the school administration in terms of the mentoring process requires careful examination. She argues that the role of the school administration in facilitating the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers is not well documented. While Ganser (2001) believes that the role of the administration in the mentoring process of novice teachers should be a passive one and that the teacher mentor should play the

predominant role, researchers such as Brock & Hope (1999) have argued that the school administration should also be proactive in the mentoring process.

Brock (1999) explains that administrators need to nurture and help their teachers develop and assist with the transition from teacher education programs into the culture of the school. Hope (1999) points out that regular contact is needed from administrators in order to inform novice teachers of expectations and successfully orient them into the culture of the school. Hope (1999) identifies six elements of professional development that should emerge from contact between the new teacher and the school administration: (a) intervention to decrease the isolation of teachers, (b) the facilitation of collaborative relationships and mentoring, (c) accessibility, (d) making professional development available, (e) ensuring that the teaching assignment is aligned in order to ensure success, and (f) describing the process of evaluation.

Wang & Odell's (2002) criticism of the deficiencies of teacher education programs indicates the need for the school administration to be proactive in terms of supporting beginning teachers. Tillman (2005) highlights the importance of administrators assisting novice teachers in understanding the culture of the school and becoming reflective practitioners. She points out that it is equally important that teachers are helped to transition and relate what they have learned in their teacher education programs into the context of the school in which they are teaching. Tillman (2005) also analyses the intentional outcomes of the mentoring process suggesting that by enhancing the novice teacher's personal and professional development beginning teachers may be able to shift their skills and knowledge to their current school setting.

Wojnowski et al. (2003) assert that there are distinct consequences that emerge as a result of effective mentoring and induction. Teacher quality improves and there is a noticeable development of both the mentee and mentor's teacher skills that can lead to increased retention rates. Bartell (2005) reports that if induction activities challenge teachers to critically examine their own practice and reflect on student learning, this in turn helps students by helping their teachers. Similarly Robinson (1998) suggests that successful induction programs are more likely to produce effective teachers who in turn benefit student learning by encouraging them to take risks.

Research on induction, coaching, mentoring and other types of support appears to focus on how universities, school systems, teaching federations, site based administrators and veteran teachers can offer support to beginning teachers. Although their methods of evaluation and analysis may differ somewhat, all agree that it is difficult to overestimate the importance of mentoring, induction, and support for beginning teachers, and experienced faculty. What is evident is that school districts must invest in induction programs and support systems if beginning teachers are to prove successful. Horn, Sterling & Subhan (2002) suggest that an effective induction program is provided through orientation, mentoring, professional development, and collaboration. Both the extent and quality of induction programs vary extensively between school districts and from state to state. While individual school districts may have particular circumstances and needs, effective induction, support and mentoring programs for beginning teachers needs to be a priority. Nevertheless, due to the lack of finances, politics, commitment and

other resources, some induction programs prove to be ineffective and lacking in specific areas (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

The needs of beginning teachers are well articulated by Veenman (1984, pp. 153-156), who categorized the ten most crucial issues that new teachers face: classroom discipline, student motivation, dealing with individual differences among students, assessment of student work, interaction with parents, organizing work, obtaining sufficient materials for adequate instruction, dealing with students' personal problems, heavy course loads with inadequate preparation time, and getting along with colleagues. However, as beginning teachers gain more classroom experience and develop relationships with parents and students these pertinent needs become increasingly less stressful for the novice teacher.

Gordon and Maxey (2000) collated a set of needs for beginning teachers and suggest that if these needs are met it is likely that the novice teacher will progress and develop into a successful teacher.

- adjusting to the teaching environment and role
- planning, organizing, and managing instruction as well as other professional responsibilities
- dealing with individual students' needs, interest, abilities, and problems
- managing the classroom
- obtaining instructional resources and materials
- using effective teaching methods

- communicating with colleagues, including administrators, supervisors, and other teachers
- communicating with parents
- motivating students
- receiving emotional support
- assessing students and evaluating student progress. (p. 6).

Although Gordon & Maxey identify some of the most prevailing issues for the novice teacher here, this list is by no means exhaustive in terms of the needs of beginning teachers.

Characteristics of Beginning Teachers

This section will examine the current research on the characteristics of beginning teachers, including the various stages of development. In terms of the challenges that new teachers face, it will highlight some of the issues that researchers suggest contribute to the stress levels of beginning teachers, their disillusionment with the profession and why some novice teachers decide to leave the teaching profession.

Researchers have suggested that people enter the teaching profession because they take pleasure from interacting with young people. A further reason certain people choose to become teachers is that they care about the welfare and education of students and have a strong desire to help them achieve academically (Gold & Roth 1993; & Lortie, 1975).

Bartell's (2005) work bears careful reading as she points out new teacher motivations and career choices:

Novice teachers today enter the profession with differing levels of preparation, experience, and expertise. Like the students they will serve, they come with a variety of expectations, hopes, dreams, and understandings. Some will go through a traditional teacher preparation program and will enter the job market immediately after graduation. Others will find their initial career choice unsatisfying and look for more satisfaction in teaching. (p. 9).

According to Wadsworth (2001), beginning teachers feel that they are talented individuals who have responded to some type of calling. Further, they perceive themselves as hardworking and devoted to the teaching profession. It is their belief that teaching is a profession known for requiring high levels of energy, effort and dedication.

Clement, Enz, and Pawlas (2000) state that novice teachers are passionate about their work, idealistic, creative, energetic, and have a desire to develop professionally. Hargreaves and Fullan (1999) suggest that it is the younger members of the profession who usually bring more energy into the classroom. They believe that these young teachers generally have less family responsibilities, are typically more idealistic and are inclined to be more dedicated to the profession. Yet Veenman (1984) believes that beginning teachers experience ‘reality shock’ as a state of mind when the realization of the demands of teaching becomes real to them. According to Villani (2002), teacher education students predicted that they expected to encounter less difficulties than the ‘average first-year teacher’ on numerous tasks. Based on these findings, Weinstein (1988) suggests that beginning teachers enter the teaching profession with the belief that teaching is not particularly difficult. Thus, Villani (2002) argues that it is necessary for mentors to help with the inevitable “reality shock” (p. 4).

Psychological Stages of a First-Year Teacher

Villani (2002) believes that the survival needs of novice teachers are highest at both the beginning and end of the school year and suggests that the new teachers curriculum and instructional needs are less crucial during these times. In contrast, she highlights the fact that mid-year (a time when the survival needs of new teachers are at their lowest), the instructional and curriculum needs are at their highest. Villani (2002) compares this with Maslow's hierarchy of needs and suggests that one cannot take care of high order needs until one's survival needs are met. She concurs that novice teachers are unable to contemplate issues surrounding instruction and curriculum until they have acquired knowledge of the protocol of the school and have established a rapport with their students, which satisfies and contributes to their academic learning.

Moir (1999) identified several developmental stages that novice teachers' experience. Her research indicates how initially beginning teachers go through an *anticipation phase* with an idealistic view of teaching. However, they rapidly become overwhelmed and experience a *survival phase* with a sense of struggling to keep up. Moir (1999) points out that during this second phase new teachers are inclined to focus on the day-to-day aspects of teaching. It is frequently this phase that leads to the next phase that of *disillusionment*. This is where novice teachers start to doubt their levels of commitment and also their ability to teach. Moir (1999) suggests that this phase may vary in terms of both duration and intensity. Typically following the winter break, teachers are well rested and somewhat more relaxed and often enter a phase of *rejuvenation*. It is at this time that the beginning teacher gains confidence and learns to develop new coping

strategies. Moir (1999) believes that it is towards the end of the school year that new teachers begin to reflect on the earlier part of the school year and thus they enter a period of *reflection*. It is during this phase that the new teacher starts to contemplate what they will do differently during their second year of teaching. Moir (1999) emphasizes that “recognizing the stages that new teachers go through gives us a framework within which we can begin to design support programs to make the first year of teaching a more productive experience for our new colleagues” (p. 23).

Traditionally Prepared Teachers and Alternative Licensure into the Teaching Profession

Bartell (2005) stresses that those who plan teacher induction have some understanding of the skills and knowledge that new teachers bring to the profession. She points out that new teachers are increasingly entering the profession through alternative routes to certification; yet it is the ‘early deciders’ who enter through the traditional four or five year college education program. Typically these teachers study the subject content pedagogy of the subject they wish to teach. Darling-Hammond et al, (1999) believe that the best traditional teacher preparation programs also offer the following components:

- *Knowledge about learners and learning*, including knowledge about human growth and development, motivation and behavior, learning theory, learning differences, and cognitive psychology;
- *Knowledge about curriculum and teaching*, including general and content-specific pedagogical knowledge, curriculum theory, assessment and

evaluation, and counseling, as well as knowledge of scientific inquiry, epistemology, communication, and language as they relate to pedagogy;

- *Knowledge about contexts and foundations of education*, including knowledge about schools and society, cultures, educational history and philosophy, principles from sociology and anthropology, legal responsibilities of teachers and ethics. (p. 35-38).

Bartell (2005) explains that most traditional programs also incorporate field experiences into the program. She accepts that teaching programs may vary but contends that generally teachers bring what they have learned in these programs to their first teaching position. In addition she states that “these novices are hardly finished learners about the profession they have chosen to enter... Induction programs are intended not to reteach, but to build upon and extend that initial preparation experience” (p. 7). However, Bartell asserts that the increasing number of people entering the profession without this basic classroom preparation is somewhat problematic. She identifies that alternative programs vary considerably from state to state ranging between programs that are offered evenings, weekends and throughout the summer to programs where certification can be achieved through assessment of knowledge and skills and demonstrated experience. Typically, teachers who opt to take the alternative certification route take coursework classes at the same time that they are serving as teachers.

Bartell (2005) stresses the important point that “all of these teachers have different learning needs depending on the background, preparation, and experience that they bring to the job” (p. 8). She cites examples of new teachers moving from one state to

another, from an urban district to a rural district from one grade level to another and contends that in these circumstances the new teacher must learn to assimilate to his/her new surroundings. Similarly she alludes to the fact that a teacher who returns to the profession after a career break also has to gain knowledge of the current curriculum and assessment standards. Bartell (2005) suggests that the most successful induction and mentoring programs will address all of these possible differences and needs of beginning teachers in order to ensure success with their students:

An effective plan for support of all these new teachers will recognize and build on the knowledge and experience the beginning teacher brings to the classroom, assist teachers in gaining what is weak or lacking, and extend learning so that the teacher moves to higher levels of accomplished teaching (p. 9).

School District Orientation, Resources and Written Documentation for Beginning Teachers

Orientation is a support system that introduces all teachers new to the school district to the districts' policies and procedures. All teachers new to the school district, that is whether new to the profession or new to the school district, must attend this formal new teacher orientation program. This three-day program offered prior to the new school year beginning includes lectures given by a variety of school district employees and local university representatives. Information is provided by people such as school district psychologists, human resources and other groups that the school district deem may be useful to new teachers. Orientation topics typically focus on areas such as district policies and procedures, classroom management, lesson planning, relationships with parents,

Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Standards, and teaching children with disabilities.

In addition to orientation, new teachers are given a notebook that provides a wealth of information on subjects such as the school district's policy and procedures, classroom management, lesson planning, relationships with parents, INTASC Standards, strategies for learning, and teaching children with disabilities. The notebook also includes items such as a school calendar and important contact details of specific central office staff. In the Appendix there are references to Library Media Services, Educational Web Sites, the Code of Ethics for Educators, the county Administrative Policies and Procedures, and Definitions of Terms, Phrases, and Acronyms. All teachers are also provided with a "*Beginning Teacher Support Program Orientation Packet*," which offers information on "*Three Years of Beginning Teacher Induction in the State*." This packet includes items for the Beginning Teacher requirements for the first three years of teaching. It focuses on areas such as attending seminars, earning professional development credits, mentoring, securing a buddy teacher, developing an Individual Growth Plan, the evaluation process and the INTASC Standards. This is a comprehensive document that offers a step by step guide and examples of how to complete particular documents as a first, second or third year teacher. Lateral entry teachers are also given a document "*Three Year Time Line for Lateral Entry Teachers. Check List to Licensure*." This is a step by step checklist that provides lateral entry teachers with details of their "path to licensure." All lateral entry teachers are also given a copy of the textbook "*How to be an Effective Teacher. The First Days of School*" by Harry & Rosemary Wong

(2004). High school teachers that are not lateral entry but are new to the school district, are given copies of the text “*Why Didn’t I learn this in College?*” by Paula Rutherford (2002).

On the school district web site there is also a wealth of information on beginning teacher resources that novice teachers are advised to download and use to inform their teaching practice. The information ranges between *Banners & Bulletin Board Ideas, Newsletter, Signs and other forms, Maps, Power Point Presentations, Certificates, Form Letters, Calendars, Test forms, and Instructional Resources and Strategies* (the School District, 2007). It is intended that these resources offer supplementary materials for new teachers and help in areas such as classroom management, lesson planning, relationships with students and parents and other central office information specific to a novice teacher. Used collaboratively, these documents provide strong evidence that the school district offers a sound support structure for teachers that are new to the school district.

There is also an opportunity for new teachers to become acquainted with other new teaching colleagues during the orientation program and also an allotted amount of time to be spent in the teachers’ new school. It is intended that during this time the new teacher is able to prepare their classroom for the new school year and learn about the culture of the school. In addition if the beginning teachers are lateral entry teachers, they must also go through lateral entry training. In an effort to offer greater success for lateral entry teachers, this training consists of an initial 10 lateral entry-training program. During the orientation training the new lateral teacher is also given an online independent study assignment to complete.

All beginning teachers with less than three years of appropriate experience must participate in the Beginning Teacher Support Program. This is a three-year program that ensures continuous professional preparation and offers numerous opportunities in terms of professional development such as classroom management, reading in the content area, curriculum and instruction to name but a few. All new teachers must earn at a minimum two professional development credits per year. However, from my observations it appears that many teachers earn many more than the minimum given the professional development training that is mandatory. In addition to earning professional development credits all lateral entry teachers must earn at least six hours of college coursework during their first year towards their teaching license. Teachers receive written confirmation from the state advising them which courses they must take to fulfill their licensure requirements. All beginning teachers are observed and evaluated at least four times with a final summative evaluation. In addition all beginning teachers are assigned a mentor.

Summary

The existing research provides useful insights into contemporary methods of beginning teacher support, mentoring and induction programs. Yet what is not evident is how effective the mentoring and induction program is for lateral entry teachers. This does not suggest that the initial experiences of beginning teachers are entirely different from those of their colleagues that teach in an established school with experienced administrators. Although lateral entry teachers may lack pre-service training in the field of education, once employed within the school district they experience many of the same conditions as their counterparts. Future research must address the areas of leadership,

district level support and school-based support as it appears that there are variations in terms of levels of support received by beginning teachers from state to state, and across and within school districts. Little research has been conducted on whether the levels of support that are documented and commonly accepted within school districts are in fact provided for beginning teachers. Thus, additional research and evaluation specific to current school district induction programs may consider using a follow up method to evaluate how effective the mentoring and induction program really is across an entire school district.

The conceptual framework for this case study argues that the first years of teaching are typically the most challenging for beginning teachers. Often novice teachers struggle to survive day-to-day (Bartell, 2005). Some of these challenges are minor in nature, whereas others have the potential to cause a new teacher to consider leaving the profession. Increasing awareness of how crucial these initial years are in retaining beginning teachers has led to more attention being paid to the mentoring and induction process of novice teachers. Bartell's work is important as it provides a practical framework for this study and its subsequent analysis. Based on what is already known about the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers there is a need to expand upon this knowledge and examine the mentoring and induction process at the Independent School. By doing so new findings may emerge that will contribute to the existing research.

This chapter reviewed the current literature on the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers. It offered an overview in relation to the central purpose of

the case study. This study used a qualitative, case study research approach to reflect the beginning teacher perceptions of the mentoring and induction program within their school district. Chapter III will describe the research design of the case study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter, an overview of the research literature used to design this study was presented to include the ideas that offer impetus to the study. Written documentation obtained from the school district central office, such as resource materials appropriate to beginning teachers support and induction programs, were summarized to reveal the underlying fundamental principles behind the school district support systems. Information presented in Chapter II offers insight into how mentoring and induction programs affect new teachers' practice and dispositions and subsequently the extent of the needs of teachers new to the profession. Chapter III focuses on the purpose of this study and offers an overview of the design of the study. Research questions, research design, instrumentation, participant sampling procedures, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques will also be presented in Chapter III.

Research Questions

The following research questions were the primary research questions for the study:

1. What kinds of adequate support do beginning teachers say that they need in the induction and mentoring process? How do new teachers perceive the support that they actually receive?
2. How do beginning teachers develop as teachers as a result of support and experience?

- 3 How do new teachers respond to critical incidents and what support is necessary for them to respond successfully?
4. How does the support beginning teachers receive and the extent to which they develop influence their decision to stay in the teaching profession?

Research Design

Using the four research questions as a foundation, this study used a qualitative, case study research approach to reflect the beginning teacher perceptions of the mentoring and induction program within their school district. Creswell's (1998) definition of a case study is "an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p. 61). This case is a "bounded system by time (data collection) and place (a single campus)" (p. 37). A single program (within-site study) was selected for the purpose of this study.

The case study offers insight into the phenomenon being studied in this case mentoring and induction as it exposes real life situations. Stake (2000) indicates that the goal of the case study is to offer a deeper awareness about the subject, which may in turn influence practice. Merriam (2001) argues that "case study has proven particularly useful for studying educational innovations for evaluating programs and for informing practice" (p. 41). This insight is helpful for researchers, school districts and beginning teachers when analyzing current mentoring and induction programs in that it has the potential to inspire and inform prospective program development in order to improve the mentoring and induction process for beginning teachers.

As qualitative research is able to offer an awareness from the participants' perspective, the use of qualitative research for this investigation conveyed a specific understanding of beginning teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentoring and induction process. Glatthorn (1998) points out that qualitative inquiry emphasizes a phenomenological view, whereby the substance of the research is inherent with the perceptions of the individual participants.

Creswell (1994) states that single stage sampling is having "access to names in the population" (p. 119) and directly sampling the population. In this case study a single-sampling process was employed. Access to the participants was also convenient, because I as the principal researcher was working in the role of induction coach with the group of teachers. The design of this study, which is a qualitative participant-observer methodology, employed appropriate forms of research involving human instruments, that is a medium through which the data was compiled and interpreted. Creswell (1998) points out that, "A case study involves the widest array of data collection as the researcher attempts to build an in-depth picture of the case" (p. 123). Interviews, observations, and field notes were the principal methods used to collect data in this study in order to develop an effective and comprehensive narration of the perceptions of beginning teachers of one large urban district's mentoring and induction program.

Semi-structured interviews, observations and field-notes from classroom observations were utilized as data collection tools to guarantee that a reliable qualitative study was accomplished. Through these methods I was able to observe, examine and analyze the specific situations and experiences of the teachers and students in the school

setting. There is an abundance of existing research on the mentoring and induction programs that school districts provide for beginning teachers that has fundamentally utilized surveys and questionnaires. However, there is little research based on the evidence provided by beginning teachers, which relates to their perceptions of how mentoring and induction programs affect their practice and dispositions.

The semi-structured questions during the interview process enabled teachers to introduce and reflect on issues that are of interest and value to them as novice teachers. The very nature of this type of questioning facilitates critical analysis of the teachers' own experiences and raises questions about the habits that they form. Researchers such as Keyes, 2000; Henson, 1996; Oja & Pine, 1989 have argued that teachers who are involved in inquiry are likely to become more reflective, more critical and analytical in their teaching practices. That is, they develop the ability to become more candid and readily seek out professional development opportunities. In addition, they are more apt to be conscious of the decisions they make and of student behavior in the classroom setting.

As the teachers developed their own accounts, they were able to reflect on their experiences and learning. In addition they were thoughtful in reworking and reframing some of the challenges they had previously and continue to face. They discussed what they could have done differently and clearly developed as thoughtful professionals and learners. They used time and reflection to reframe events from their experiences so that they were able to make greater sense of their experiences and of their reactions to these experiences. This was evident in the manner in which they answered the interview questions. We learn much about the participants in this case study as their stories unfold.

They share details about their personal lives, their upbringings, conceptual frames of reference, and they highlight concerns important to every new teacher. Included in these concerns are issues about classroom discipline, time management, the importance of good lesson plans, curriculum and instruction, and astonishment that things have gone better than the teachers have initially expected.

A voice recorder was used during the interviews, but the line of questioning had to be flexible as I felt that it was not possible to follow rigid questions. I wanted the interviews to develop from stories of the participant's lives, in their own words. It became evident in the course of the interviews that if I had used structured questions valuable information would have been lost. Similarly, there was also the issue of the participant becoming side tracked and therefore offering some unrequired material.

Audio-taping the interview, according to Sagor (2000, p. 107) "frees you from the need to take notes and allows you to make the interviewee more comfortable with eye contact and interaction. It also gives you a verbatim account for later use in analysis."

I learned from the teachers their perceptions of the benefits of induction and mentoring for novice teachers, the types of support they received, the types of support they desired, and the impact they consider this has had on their teaching experiences practices, and dispositions. I learned what benefits they perceive will evolve from improved district level and site based level support and what changes or improvements they would like to see in the mentoring and induction process. As Weiss states "Being a good interviewer requires knowing what kind of information the study needs and being

able to help the respondent provide it” (Weiss, 1994, p. 66). I consider that my interview questions produced the type of information that was needed for my research.

In order to “provide an opportunity for participants to make additional comments... Try to separate fact from fiction by asking follow-up questions.” (Sagor 2000, p. 106). I used a list of follow-up questions and prompts to clarify certain points and gain additional evidence and data such as those suggested by Weiss (1994):

Sometimes the best question is one that in a very few words directs the respondent to give more detail or fill in a gap: ‘What happened then?’ ... ‘Could you give me a concrete instance of that, a time that actually happened, with as much detail as you can?’ Any question that helps the respondent produce the material you need is a good question (p. 73).

All forms of evidence are subject to distortion and bias of a conscious or unconscious nature. Some people may be inclined to say what they think the principal researcher wishes to hear. However, this was not evident in the interviews that were conducted for this study as I had built up trusting relationships with the participants prior to this study being carried out. Therefore, it seems that the very nature of this work was unlikely to encourage this kind of response. The participants spoke freely in the relaxed private atmosphere of their classrooms during their planning time. I was interested in documenting the teachers’ perceptions, opinions, feelings, memories, and data that were not observable in any objective manner, which Baldwin (2000) refers to as “information no one else knows” (p. 3).

It seems clear too, that it is not possible in any study of controversial social issues entirely to suppress the author’s personal views, however great his or her efforts at

scholarly objectivity. One cannot but endeavor to set down the evidence with as little bias as is humanly possible; but it may be just as well to face these limitations and to state them beforehand with all honesty. I was aware that I had to monitor my subjectivity in order for it not to affect the data. As Peshkin (1988) points out “I do rather enable myself to manage it-to preclude it from being unwittingly burdensome-as I progress through collecting, analyzing, and writing up my data” (p. 20). I was mindful of my subjectivity throughout, as I did not want it to go unnoticed as I transcribed the data. I was aware of it at all times during the entire process and considered what Peshkin calls “its enabling potential” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 18).

Clarifying researcher bias from the outset of the study is crucial for the audience to understand the researcher’s position. Fundamentally this highlights any biases or assumptions that are likely to affect the inquiry (Merriam, 1988). Creswell affirms this belief stating that through the process of clarification “the researcher comments on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study” (p. 202). Therefore, at this stage it seems appropriate that a discussion of my role as a researcher is made clear.

My background as a teacher of History and English together with the training that I received as an undergraduate has reinforced the belief that it is imperative for one to recognize bias and be aware of one’s own subjectivity. I consider this to be particularly crucial in this situation because I have in the past experienced some of the issues that the teachers shared with me during the process of data collection. I do not think that my cultural difference impeded my research, if anything I believe it enhanced my

understanding of personality and cultural differences. As an international educator I consider that I have been made fundamentally aware of these types of differences and believe that I am much more considerate of other people's viewpoints. Therefore I feel that no assumptions were evident on my part.

At the time this research was conducted I was serving as a central office doctoral intern in the school district where this research takes place. Reflecting on my own teaching and internship experiences enabled me as the researcher to understand the particular experiences of the beginning teachers. As I had played an active role in the school district's orientation process for teachers new to the county, I was able to reveal and consider the intricate details of the district's experience with induction. I believe that this provided me with a richer understanding of this unique stage of teacher development. Evaluating the perspectives of multiple stakeholders involved in new teacher induction offers clearer understanding into the design and implementation of its practices.

In addition, I considered the unique situation and the relationships that I had formed with the participants both as a university researcher and induction coach. I realized that there were many variables that could potentially affect my analysis of the experiences of the participants. According to Creswell (1998), the researcher must approach a qualitative study with specific philosophical assumptions and implications for practice. In terms of the epistemological assumptions that the researcher brings to bear on the study Creswell poses the question "What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?" (p. 75). In addition Creswell believes that the epistemological characteristics of the philosophical assumption is evident as the researcher tries to

decrease the distance between him/herself and the research. Creswell offers an example of the implications for practice when he states that the “researcher collaborates, spends time in the field with participants, and becomes an ‘insider’ (p. 75).

Questions Posed to the Participants

This case study examined the perceptions of beginning teachers of the mentoring and induction process at the high school level and in order to reveal a rich and holistic cultural portrait of the teachers, the first section of the instrument asked participants to provide demographic information. Questions in this section asked participants to identify their age, socio-economic status, high school locations and college degrees achieved, current status in terms of licensure, traditional versus lateral entry beginning teachers, and experience in their career of choice.

The second section of the instrument initially asked a broad question, “Tell me the story of how you became a teacher.” Additional supplementary open-ended questions were designed to give the participants the opportunity to fill in gaps and identify and reflect on areas in which they considered their practices and dispositions were affected by the district support they either did or did not receive as a new teacher. These questions were included to allow participants the opportunity to express their concerns that had not been identified in the first section of the instrument. This section included such items as:

- (a) Is teaching what you expected it to be?
- (b) Explain what your teaching experience has been like this year.
- (c) Name some of your likes and dislikes of the teaching profession.
- (d) Has your school district assisted you this year? If so in what ways?

- (e) What types of support do you consider that you need as a beginning teacher?
- (f) What do you believe district support should look like?
- (g) Are you receiving what you believe district level support should look like? If so, cite some examples.
- (h) Will the district level support that you have received affect whether or not you decide to remain in the teaching profession?
- (i) Do you have any other information that you would like to share?

As the purpose of this study was to investigate how mentoring and induction programs affect new teachers' practice and dispositions, generalizability is limited. Merriam (1998) points out that, "In qualitative research, a single case or small nonrandom sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many" (p. 208). Thus, no generalizations have been based on this information and it is recognized that sample studies only provide an incomplete indication of the scale of the question under study. It is recognized that the sample here is not large enough to be statistically valid.

The Participants

One school system in the southeast was contacted in order to seek permission to participate in this study. It is the third largest school district in the state serving more than 70,000 students. The second largest employer in a 12-county area, the school district employees more than 9,700 full- and part-time employees. Of the district's 116 schools located in both urban and rural areas, 65 are elementary, serving grades K through 5, and in some instances, even Pre-K through 5. The district also has 21 middle schools, 25 high

schools, two special education schools, two alternative school sites, which provide an alternative to long-term suspensions and another school, which offers high school students a flexible schedule to complete graduation requirements. (The School District, 2007).

The school district was chosen for this study because it is located in the area where I as the principal investigator was working with a group of teachers as an induction coach. In addition, it was chosen because it was a particularly unique situation. The school was a new 10-12th grade high school, the administration was new, and all except one teacher was new to the school district. The teacher participants for this qualitative study, however, comprised of six lateral entry Beginning Teacher Is and one Beginning Teacher II.

As six of the seven beginning teachers in this case study were lateral entry teachers in a new school this exacerbated the need for an effective system of induction and support. Essentially the very nature of the Independent School and the unique circumstances of it suggested that this case study would glean an abundance of information and insight that I as the principal researcher might not typically have had access to.

The aim of the research was to analyze beginning teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentoring and induction process. It involved exploring if beginning teachers believed that they received adequate support from their mentors and from the school district as a whole. Additionally the question was also posed if the level of support

the teachers received would ultimately determine whether they decided to leave or remain in the teaching profession.

After completing the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) application form, an identical copy was sent to the applicable school district's Research Review Committee for approval. To ensure confidentiality, the participants, the school district, as well as the chosen school site, are referred to by pseudonyms. A further meeting was set up with the school principal so that approval to use the school in the study could be obtained.

The School Setting

According to Creswell (1998), the context of the case involves situating the case within its setting. Therefore the contextual material such as background information, demographics and similar statistical data provided by the school administrator and the school district offer useful insight to the nature and foundation of the Independent School and its students.

The Independent School was designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to make a successful transition to college and/or a future career. Students choose from two rigorous, career-focused pathways: Culinary Arts or Public Safety. Each pathway allows students to complete all graduation requirements during grades 10 and 11 in preparation for enrollment in freshman-level college courses during the senior year. The goal is to prepare students for the future. (The School District, 2007). The highlights of the Independent School are as follows:

- Personalized learning as a result of a small, career-focused learning community

- Interdisciplinary teams working with common groups of students to create a network of support
- Rigorous, relevant curriculum giving students the tools to apply classroom knowledge and skills to real life situations (The School District, 2007).

There was an initial discussion about the setting up of the Independent School in March 2006 by the school district superintendent. The current principal was interviewed in May 2006 for the administrator position and was appointed in July 2006. She had formerly been an assistant principal in the school district. The Independent School opened in August 2006 serving students' 10-12th grade. The Independent School is a separate school, which provides a smaller student-centered learning environment. Students have the opportunity to take charge of their academic, post-secondary and career goals (The School District, 2007).

The principal believes that it was envisioned that the existing Culinary Arts and Medical Careers programs that are at the adjacent high school would be expanded at the new school. A Public Safety program was also intended to attract students. Yet, typically 3 or 4-year colleges have distinct requirements for such programs. The principal stated that, "this program was not implemented as the Independent School was not able to have all the components taught by firefighters and law enforcement officers." This meant that the Independent School was not able to offer all of the classes that had been initially promised.

In terms of the student population the principal explained that, "It is supposed to have over 100 students, ideally 125. As of September 2006 there were 127 students

enrolled at the Independent School. In April 2007 this number had decreased to 85 students.” In 2007 students will be allowed to graduate with 20 credits. In 2008, once the 9th grade is added students will have to graduate with 28 credits. The Independent School has 90% minority students and 85-90% of the students are from families below the poverty level.

In addition to the six Beginning I lateral entry teachers and one Beginning II teacher, there is one veteran teacher of nine years, one experienced guidance counselor, and one half time social worker who was appointed mid year. There is also a retired guidance counselor who has extensive community contacts. The principal interviewed and appointed the current teachers during the first ten days of August 2006. This diverse group of teachers was recruited from the school district’s pool of candidates. The school administration accepted the challenge of inducting beginning lateral entry teachers while attempting to ensure that an effective teaching environment was sustained. According to the principal many of the students had been recruited from the adjacent high school in an attempt to improve their academic achievement and test scores.

Data Collection Techniques

In order to gain an extensive awareness of beginning teachers’ perceptions of mentoring and induction a semi-structured interview was developed for use with the participants. Qualitative research uses appropriate procedures for collecting empirical data. These methods vary between observations and fieldwork to interviews and questionnaires. Thomas and Brubaker (2000) explain that interviews enable individuals

to release facts about themselves in terms of their lives and perspectives they have about specific issues and situations and morals and values they hold.

Creswell (1998) argues that “for one-on-one interviewing, the researcher needs individuals who are not hesitant to speak and share ideas and needs to determine a setting in which this is possible” (p. 124). The data collection techniques used in this study were intended to be as unobtrusive as possible for the participants. It was my intention to respect the participants as teachers, yet I wanted the interview questions to be thought provoking and interesting for the participants. I wanted them to enjoy the interview process and see it as a reflective activity. The structure of the interview questions had to be particularly broad as the focal point of this research was intended to examine perceptions. Although the interview questions had common elements, specific questions were designed to elicit information regarding the teachers’ perceptions of the organization and implementation of the district’s beginning teacher mentoring and induction program. The aim of the teacher interview was to gain an understanding of the types of support beginning teachers received as well as the types of support they desired as novice teachers. The semi-structured interview offered the same questions to each participant. However, it was designed to allow for discussion of data unique to each participant. This approach ensured that there were no restrictions placed on each of the participants as they answered the interview questions.

To ensure participant confidentiality, I as the principal investigator met individually with each participant whereby the participants’ approval could be obtained. An oral presentation was given each time and then each teacher signed a consent form

agreeing to participate in the research. These consent forms explained the purpose of the study and the fact that the participants' responses and identities would remain confidential. I also guaranteed the teachers anonymity prior to conducting the interviews. I believe that the teachers shared their true feelings as I abided by this. Additionally participants were also advised that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary and they were also notified of their option to withdraw from the study at any time. Dates and times were arranged with each teacher so that the formal initial interviews could take place. To ensure an impartial setting whereby participants felt sufficiently secure to offer their perceptions, all participants were asked where they would prefer the interviews to be carried out. It was agreed that all of the interviews would occur at the Independent School during the teachers' planning periods.

I as the principal researcher was responsible for conducting the interviews with the participants. The interviews took place over a period of several weeks as I was frequently at the school site in the role of induction coach. Appointments for each interview were made at least one week in advance. However I had to be flexible as in some instances teachers were either absent or called on to cover another class. Therefore some of the interviews had to be rearranged. Each initial interview lasted between thirty minutes to an hour and thereafter interviews were carried out once or twice a week for the duration of the study. The interviews were audio taped so that important points referred to by the participants would not be missed. In order to secure compatible responses each teacher was asked the same set of questions. I also used a series of prompts to further encourage the beginning teachers to think more deeply about their experiences. This

research used interviews as a technique for empowering beginning teachers. Through this process the participants were able to provide data on issues such as whether they perceived that mentoring and the induction process was effective for beginning teachers. I transcribed all of the interviews and I personally delivered copies of the transcripts to each participant so that they could be checked for accuracy and clarity. Participants were given a period of time to make any changes or additions to the transcripts. When the transcripts were collected only minor changes were requested.

Data Analysis

I began the data analysis immediately after finishing the first interview and ensured that this was a continual process while I was working on the research. This allowed for progress focus on my interviews and observations and helped me to decide how to test my emerging conclusions (Maxwell, 1998, p. 89). I was mindful to look for and analyze discrepant data and negative cases as I realized that this was an important way of testing a proposal conclusion. According to Maxwell (1998)

There is a strong and often unconscious tendency for researchers to notice supporting instances and ignore ones that don't fit their pre-established conclusions. Thus you need to develop explicit and systematic strategies for making sure that you don't overlook data that could point out flaws in your reasoning or conclusions ... you need to examine supporting and discrepant evidence to determine whether the conclusion in question is more plausible than the potential alternatives (p. 93).

Once the data were collected it was possible to identify what the data yielded, how the data techniques connected, and ultimately what patterns and themes emerged. I transcribed all of the interviews, and then the transcripts were color-coded using

validated coding methods. Responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed using qualitative, validated coding procedures as this ensures accuracy in reporting results, themes, and emerging patterns in the data. (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Responses offered by participants were also analyzed to identify whether any concerns were expressed more by some teachers than others.

Data were then coded and classified depending upon the perceived and provided needs of novice teachers and provided district level support, as characterized by the beginning teachers. The coded data were analyzed by comparing the perceptions of support needed or provided across the various interview participants. Answers from beginning teachers were compared in the search for similarities and differences in the types of district level support needed or desired. I assessed the methods that the school district literature requires for school district administrators to support beginning teachers. I evaluated whether teachers are responsive to these strategies and whether they are successful. I kept in mind that I wanted to use the data beyond its functional purpose, expressing somehow the teachers' larger sense of identity, mission, and purpose, and how they deal with the politics within the school district.

As a result I was able to identify certain characteristics and similarities and differences in the participants' responses. It was also possible to determine specific theories concerning the effectiveness of the mentoring program and district level support. Responses to the interview questions were reported in a narrative form. A comparison was also made between the research data and the literature on the effectiveness of mentoring beginning teachers as it relates to district level support.

Three different data sources were triangulated. Taped interviews, field notes, and observations of beginning teachers were compared to note any commonalities and differences of beginning teachers' perceptions of mentoring and induction programs and how new teachers' practice and dispositions played out in the classroom. Creswell (1998) asserts that through the use of triangulation, researchers make use of various multiple and miscellaneous sources, methods, investigators, and theories in an attempt to offer substantiating evidence of data. He contends that "typically, this process involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective" (p. 202). Through informal and formal observations, and interviews, I consider that I gained access to a wide range of data that was accordingly used as reliable and valid. By using the process of triangulation as advocated by Maxwell (1998), I was able to compare and contrast data, themes and commonalities. The use of triangulation was multi-purpose in that it was also used to strengthen validity and reliability.

Member checks were carried out in collaboration with the participants. Transcripts were delivered in person to each participant and they were given the opportunity to review them for clarity and conciseness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that member checks are "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Creswell (1998) supports this approach as he states that it "involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (p. 203). Similarly, Stake (1995) believes that participants should "play a major role directing as well as acting in case study" research. He contends that participants should be provided with initial drafts of the research and

given opportunities to offer “alternative language, critical observations or interpretations” (p. 115).

Creswell (1998, p. 203) states that, “*Rich, thick description* allows the reader to make decisions regarding transferability,” as the researcher offers a thorough description of the participants and the setting of the study. This enables the audience to transfer data to other settings and allows the audience to make a decision as to whether these data and findings can be transferred “because of shared characteristics” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 32). For this study transferability was also established. A thorough description of the participants’ perceptions of the mentoring and induction process was offered during the interview process of the seven participants and through a thorough review of the literature. Effectively, this will offer a foundation for others interested in the area of beginning teacher mentoring and induction programs that may wish to utilize these findings as a basis for future research.

This study employed the concept of external audits as advocated by (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998) which fundamentally ensures dependability and confirmability. In this process the auditor assesses the dependability of the study, as well as analyzes the product, the data, findings, interpretations, and conclusions. In addition, the auditor is also able to establish whether the study is supported by data and is essentially congruous. The external audit process was initially established at my comprehensive examination defense, the proposal defense and continued through an ongoing close relationship between the myself as the researcher,

my committee chair and my other committee members. I consistently submitted the research to my committee chair for review.

As all of this study is based on interviews with participants who live in the southeast, some indication of how they were selected may prove helpful. A direct method of inquiry was employed after I met the participants in the role of induction coach. I listened to their conversations and witnessed the beginning teacher experiences, which they encountered on a daily basis. I observed each teacher in their classroom and considered that they indeed had an abundance of information that would be useful for academic research. As I listened to the novice teachers talk among themselves, many of their statements were inspiring, thoughtful and rationale. Each time I listened to the participants, either formally or informally, I became more aware that I should document what they had to say.

Summary

Chapter III presented the research questions, research design, instrumentation, data collection techniques, a description of the school setting, and data analysis procedures. The data were analyzed to determine how mentoring and induction programs affect new teachers' practice and dispositions, and subsequently the extent of the needs of teachers new to the profession. Techniques for developing and reviewing the trustworthiness of the interview instruments were also explained. There were seven beginning teachers selected for this qualitative case study, six of whom were Beginning Teacher Is, and one Beginning Teacher II. Chapter IV will describe the demographic details of the participants.

CHAPTER IV

MEET THE TEACHERS

Chapter III presented the research questions, research design, instrumentation, data collection techniques, a description of the school setting, and data analysis procedures. Chapter IV introduces the reader to the participants and offers some insight into the teacher's personal and educational backgrounds, personalities, and any former careers they may have pursued prior to joining the teaching profession.

There were six Beginning lateral entry I teachers and one Beginning Teacher II. The participants were all assigned to teach in a public high school across the 10-12 grade levels. These individuals come from various backgrounds, hold a variety of academic qualifications, and bring a diverse set of experiences to the Independent School. The participants were selected for this study because I as the researcher had direct access to them through serving as an induction coach for the local school district. Although the participants were conveniently located, the findings are likely to be closely aligned with other beginning teachers in other school districts that are similar in size and nature.

The responses from the participants offer a variety of perspectives that cut across gender, race, cultural, socio-economic status, and multiple and competing intelligences. However, they provide the reader with valuable information as the teachers reflect on their life experiences. By way of introduction to the teachers, this section of the study examined the demographics and characteristics of the teachers to include: (a) age; (b) socio-economic class; (c) college attended; (d) college major; (e) whether they have attended graduate school; (f) subject taught and subject certified in/will be certified in;

(g) career of choice; (h) why they chose to become a teacher. Each participant shared information about his/her life personal life with the researcher. Therefore I believe it would be prudent to share this information with the reader.

Arabella Allen

Ms. Allen is a 35 year old, female, Caucasian, first year, lateral entry English teacher at the Independent School. She moved to the area in June 2006. She is a happy outgoing person with a likeable, chatty personality. I first encountered Ms. Allen in the hallway during an initial visit to the Independent School in the fall of 2006. As she was introduced to a colleague and me, she politely responded and then rushed off down the hallway as she announced, “I have some things I need to photocopy for my students.”

What has become evident to me since being at the Independent School is that Ms. Allen works hard at building relationships. She always has a smile for the students and tries hard to build and maintain positive relationships with parents, the administration and other faculty at the school. Even though this is her first year as a teacher and she has a husband and small children, she has somehow managed to strike a balance between home and school. She has attended all of the required professional development workshops. She has represented the Independent School at school board meetings, open evenings, prom night and is interested in starting clubs and activities for the students and attending Student Staff Support Team training within the county.

According to Ms. Allen she came from a family that was “lower middle-class.” She was “one of five kids with only father working with a low income.” It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of work in working-class life. It is work that

helps to determine two crucial elements of working-class existence; the ways in which workers spend many-if not most-of their waking hours; and, of course, the amounts of money they have at their disposal. It is work that helps to determine most other aspects of working people's lives: the standards of health they enjoy; the types of accommodation in which they live; the nature of their family and neighborhood life; the ways in which they are regarded; and even, it seems, the social, political and other values they come to adopt. Yet she believed that she and her husband are lucky as they have moved into a different socio-economic class and now define themselves as "middle-class." When asked which high school she attended Ms. Allen states, "I went to Watlington High School in New York...I graduated high school in 1989." She offers this depiction of herself as a student in high school. "I was 57 out of 72 in high school not through lack of intelligence, through lack of motivation."

Ms. Allen goes on describe her post high school education:

I first went to Hillside Valley Community College in New York for two years. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do so I kept switching my major and then when I finally figured out what I wanted to do I ended up at Shires College New York where I got my BA in English.

She continues, "I am not in graduate school; I plan to as soon as I get my requirements for lateral entry." In response to a question about whether she will in the future consider pursuing National Board Examinations or a Master's Degree she replies, "I'm going to see if I can work it. I don't know if I'm going to do both or something like that, but I haven't taken any graduate classes yet."

Ms. Allen describes the area of licensure that she is currently working towards. “I’m working on my certification right now for secondary Ed English but eventually I think my masters will be in counseling.”

Her interest in becoming a teacher is associated with a strong sense of the value of education. “I have always wanted to be a teacher since I was five years old. I just always liked to learn loved to learn. I used to not be able to sleep before the first night of school, before the first day of school.” She openly displays her joy as she reminisces. “I remember my mom used to laugh it was so funny, I was so eager to go to school, and then you know I would just teach my dolls and my little sisters everything that I learned.”

Furthermore Ms. Allen offers why she chose the subject that she currently teaches:

The reason I decided on English was because I love to read, and I can't see why people don't like it. I think that one of the reasons why people don't like it is because they either don't know how to get what they need out of it, or somewhere along the line it was hard for them and it ended up being a chore rather than something fun.

When asked what motivated or inspired her to become a teacher she responds:

Ms. Wood, she was a short story teacher in college. She made everything fun. She was so into what she read. She had a question everyday that helped her get to know us, such as “what is your favorite pizza?” It made it seem like she wanted to know about us. That was when I turned around and said, “I’m going to be a short story teacher.” Then I got to college and said “that’s going to take too long so I decided to teach English instead.

According to Ms. Allen, her college grades were not high enough to allow her to enter the education program:

When I was in college I was in the English program and in order to get into the education program you had to have a 3.0 and I got a 2.85 and they wouldn't let me into the education program. So I ended up having to get my degree in English with the assumption that I would go back the following year and or go back that summer and take a couple of classes, get the GPA up and then take another year and do all my education requirements.

However despite these early career aspirations Ms. Allen's plans did not come to fruition. She speaks about her mobility as a wife and mother:

To make a long story short, I met a boy married the boy moved out of town and kept moving from state to state for a while. I just never got a chance to get into school and finish it. Then I had kids and now they're old enough so I can come back and do what I finally wanted to do.

A further inspiration for her to become a teacher is associated with the motivation of her family:

My mother is an assistant teacher on her way to getting her bachelors in elementary Ed. My sister has her bachelors in elementary Ed and is working on her masters in reading and special education. My aunt is an assistant principal with 10 years of middle and high school science teaching behind her my other aunt ran a preschool which I assisted in while I was going to college.

When asked what she needs as a lateral entry teacher to fulfil State licensure requirements she states:

18 credits. There are six classes that I need to take for my license and I agree with them [The Department of Public Instruction]. One of them is in linguistics, one of them I think [is] poetry, and one world literature, all three of which I did not take in college and all three of which are important in 10th grade and linguistics we need to work more on that here. And then the other two were education courses that's fine too.

Ms. Allen considers what would could be some viable options for her as a teacher and a mother to two young children:

I would prefer to be able not do it during the year. Even when next year comes around I would prefer not to take any classes during the year. I feel like I have enough to do without having to do that. I know having a family and doing this... This year, if I'd had to take classes especially first semester that could have put me over the edge it really could have. If I'd taken one this semester I probably would have been okay but I know some people just jumped right in and took a class and I don't know how they did it and they were first-year teachers that had never taught before and have families and other responsibilities. I agree with needing to take care of classes...but if the county got some kind of program or something together with say the local colleges or universities and really made certain classes are more available online or something like that. For me, and some of the people, who have kids it would be easier to take the online classes rather than have to run down there [the college/university] three days a week after we don't get out until 4.30.

It seems that despite the non-traditional route and the diversions that Ms. Allen has taken along the way, she has finally found her niche in life. Her enthusiasm for her role as an English teacher at the Independent School is evident. From the classroom observations that I have conducted in her classroom, and from the demeanor that she displays throughout the school, she is a teacher that aspires to best the best that she can be. She clearly wants to provide the students with the best teaching and learning opportunities that she has to offer. She knows as a first year teacher that she still has so much to learn and she is particularly open to new ideas and suggestions as to how she can improve as a teacher and states:

I like being observed. I like the feedback. You, the administrator, a visiting Curriculum Facilitator from another school within the county have all observed me. I find it helpful and it's not anything that bothers me. The person sits and

doesn't interrupt class. If people didn't watch you and coach you how would I know if I'm doing this right?

Ms. Allen shows promise of developing into a successful faculty member.

Through conversations previous to, during and since the data collection for this study, she has demonstrated an eagerness and a zest for teaching and learning. At times she has been so excited about certain projects or tasks that she has planned for her students that she can hardly contain her enthusiasm.

Madeline Bray

Ms. Bray is a 36 year old, female, first year lateral entry, African-American, Computer Applications I and II teacher at the Independent School. I first met her on an initial visit to the school in the fall of 2006. Even though this is her first year as a teacher and she has small children, she has somehow managed to strike a balance between home and school. She has attended all of the required professional development workshops. She has represented the Independent School at school board meetings and open evenings. Ms. Bray has worked hard at establishing relationships with the students and believes that:

Some of these students really look to teachers as mentors, as someone they can look up to for advice. I do have a lot of students that come to me. They will talk to me and so I am grateful that they can look to me not only as a teacher, that they can come to me when they have things going on in their life and they feel like they can trust me...I value that.

Ms. Bray also "grew up in a low economic environment." Equally, her socio-economic status has changed. "When I got married, my economic status changed to low

middle class...Now as a divorced single parent I would class myself as a middle class citizen.” She attended high school in Virginia and had what she terms “a good experience in high school.” She went to Ludford College and then transferred to Hull State University in her sophomore year. Ms. Bray has an undergraduate degree in business management and received a graduate degree in adult education in 2003. Although she is not currently a certified K-12 teacher, she is working towards being certified in business education. She is also enrolled in graduate school for her Masters degree in teaching business education and needs 15 credit hours to fulfil State licensure requirements.

When asked about her career of choice Ms. Bray states, “it was in business clerical, secretarial work; I wanted to be an administrative assistant. Then I decided I wanted to go into the public county government and work with the public in the social services field so that's actually what I began to pursue.” She has a strong self-image and is confident in her abilities as a teacher in her former career of choice:

Then after I was in social services for about seven years I decided I wanted to be back in business, but I really wanted to teach it. I actually did a lot of training, and teaching other people within the social service agency when it came to business or technology they would always come to me.

It appears that Ms. Bray’s previous job helped her to realize her love for teaching when aligned with the business world. “I love it, I love business so I just kind of went in a circle and came back around to business and decided well I really would like to be a teacher whether it's to adults or not.” She describes the transition she made from teaching adults to teaching high school students:

I pursued adult education because I thought initially, I would be teaching adults in the area of business. Then the opportunity came along for me to teach high school students, and I said, “well you know, what I was taught in my adult education is that adults are not necessarily aged 18 or older per se, but young adults definitely bear the responsibility that classifies them as adults.” So I thought high school students would be a good opportunity for me to start teaching.

Ms. Bray took me on her journey as she tells the story of how she finally traced the pathway to becoming a teacher:

I was sitting at my desk at my job in the social services department and for a while I had decided I really wanted to have something to do with business and I had applied to several places before. I went to the county job fair in 2004 and I just wanted to see if I could become a teacher based on my transcript and based on my experience. I filled out the information and right there at the job fair they looked at my transcript to see if I could be brought in as a lateral entry teacher. I found out that I could teach business because of my undergraduate degree and I qualified to come in as a lateral entry teacher and that was in 2004. Then I completed the application and I never heard anything back. I went a year and then another year and was trying to figure out why couldn't I get a job in the school system. So I kind of gave up on that idea and started trying to pursue any areas of being in the business field. Then last year after I came to my wits end with my job, I said this to myself on a Monday, and on Tuesday I got a call from a principal, that would be the principal here, who I had never met, and I didn't even apply for the position here. I had actually been talking to the human resources office with [in] the county and asking them “okay I’ve done this I’ve done that, my application is online, what am I missing, what else do I need to do?”

Ms. Bray’s voice rises at the end of her sentence indicating her frustration at wondering what else she could do to pursue a career in teaching. Her answer is finally given. “I found out that I hadn't completed one piece for all these years, and that was interviewing with the principals down at the main office. I did that...and as I completed that process my name began to be put out there as available.” I can sense her excitement and joy as she smiles, reflecting the pleasure and satisfaction that she obviously felt at

this time. “Then that Tuesday I did receive a phone call to ask if I was still interested in teaching business computers, and yes, I was overjoyed and that is actually how I interviewed with the administrator and I was offered the position and went through the training.”

As I listen to Ms. Bray I feel as though I want to breathe a sigh of relief that she has finally made the right connections within the school district and has been given the correct information which allowed her to follow her desire to become a lateral entry teacher. She is acutely aware that she is still developing as a teacher as she explains: “I know this is my first year and I still have a lot to learn and I feel that as time goes on, and I experience, and as I learn from other teachers, and mentors, and other people, that I will be able to better serve my students.”

Yet, it seems inconceivable that we have people that are keen and willing to teach in a state where there is a distinct shortage of teachers and yet some of these eager individuals are not identified as available because of the lack of follow-up procedures.

Clara Copperfield

Ms. Copperfield is a 46 year old, female, second year, African-American, Exceptional Children (EC) teacher at the Independent School. I first encountered her during a visit to the school in the fall of 2006. She was new to the Independent School district and during our initial conversation she advised me that she had been trained in elementary education. At this time Ms. Copperfield had openly displayed her disappointment at being placed outside of the area of which she was qualified to teach. Initially, Ms. Copperfield appears reserved. However from discussions with her based

around her content area I soon realize that she is totally devoted to helping the students with disabilities in her care. Ms. Copperfield describes her background:

I came from a lower class, extremely low class and yes it has changed thank God, its higher middle-class [now]. I went to high school in the eastern part of North Carolina. I went to Kings University for one year. I went to the College of distance learning [as] my husband was in the military. I went to Tennessee for a semester...one semester at the military base in Human Resources.

She is a person who worked in retail management for eight years before transitioning into teaching. She shares the story of her initial experience in the classroom. “I wanted to teach but probably at the college level so I decided to quit retail and I was going to substitute teach so that I could have some income while I was in school.” Ms. Copperfield explains why she chose teaching. “I am motivated I like helping. I didn’t want to do social work or be a nurse. I liked substitute teaching so I just figured that’s what I’d continue to do.

When asked about her teacher education training and qualifications she advised me that she had entered teaching through the traditional teacher education route and had gained her certification in another state. She responds, “the first time elementary education, special education [the] second time.”

The current school district had initially placed her at a nearby middle school teaching children with disabilities and after two days had transferred her. “I’m coming from elementary up to high school level education.” At the time that this interview takes places Ms. Copperfield has changed her mind somewhat about the fact that she was

initially unhappy with her “out of area” assignment. As she reflects on the year so far she tells me:

Overall it’s been a good experience. It went from being bad...I didn’t want to be here. I used to drive around the block once, as I didn’t want to come in. I used to think about it and I always figured I needed a job and had to go...once I didn’t have to cover classes anymore it got better.

Although the Independent School had been allocated a budget, which included a Plato teacher (a teacher who implements intervention strategies and computer assisted learning techniques), the Independent School administration had been unsuccessful in securing a teacher to take the position. She did manage to appoint a Plato teacher in October 2006 but he resigned due to personal problems after only one day. As a result, all of the teachers on a daily basis lost at least half of their planning time, as they had to cover for the Plato class.

Conversely, it is well known how critical it is that beginning teachers, especially in their first year of teaching, receive this valuable planning time. The situation was particularly difficult for the Computer Applications I and II teacher as her computer skills and knowledge meant that the administrator made the assumption that she was the most suitably qualified teacher to cover the Plato class during her planning period. As a result Ms. Bray did not receive a full planning period until the end of November 2006 when a Plato teacher was hired.

Ms. Copperfield’s demeanor has changed from when I first met her in the fall of 2006. Now when I see her in the hallways and in the classroom she seems happy to be at

the Independent School. I regularly witness her laughing and joking with students and faculty and I have witnessed a dramatic change in her demeanor since last fall.

Delores Crupp

Delores Crupp is a 25 year old, female, first year lateral entry, African-American, Social Studies teacher at the Independent School. I was first introduced to Ms. Crupp on an initial visit to the school in the fall of 2006. Although this is her first year as a teacher and she has a husband and a two-year-old daughter to care for, she is bright and cheery and likes to be organized and have everything ready for class. She has attended all of the required professional development workshops and has represented the Independent School during open evenings.

Ms. Crupp classifies herself as, “middle class, and grew up in a two-parent household.” She went to Brownhill Technical State University as an undergraduate and she is currently working on an online Masters degree in Public Administration through Willesford University. She reflects on her youth and the career decisions that she made:

When I was coming up in school I didn't think about being a teacher I was going to go into the medical field or the business field. Even when I first went to college my focus was to go straight into business. But then in my sophomore or junior year in college I decided to work for the local school district and I found that working with kids is something that I'm good at and I took it from there.

Prior to becoming a teacher she was the SIMs operator, managing school demographic statistics at an elementary school within the school district. When I asked her to tell me the story of how she became a teacher she states, “I've always wanted to be a teacher.”

She explains that her experience as a counselor with students in the school districts after school program offered some insight into working with students.

I gained a love of being with the children, because there was never a dull moment. There was always something going on and I like the energy of children. I like how they really do understand grown-up concepts and a lot of them really want to be taught well. I feel like teaching is a respected profession. The corporate world is not my thing, it's too competitive. I'm not saying that I'm not competitive but there's not a great appreciation of corporate workers. I know how to set my boundaries with students.

Ms. Crupp speaks about the requirements that she needs for teacher licensure in the state.

I need a total of 30 credits for licensure as a Social Studies 9-12 teacher. I had to have 6 credit hours during my first year. I am in the process of finishing up coursework right now. I wanted to do the fast track Berkshire Program but I can't as I can't get financial aid and I have other financial commitments.

The Berkshire Alternative Licensure Program (BAL), to which Ms. Crupp refers, is an intensive collaborative project between Blueford College and Browns College. It provides the Professional Education sequence needed for teacher licensure and offers a support network for lateral entry candidates. The BAL model is based on the successful Project ACT alternative licensure program at East Moon University. Since 1993, Project ACT has successfully assisted lateral entry teachers in the eastern part of the state to obtain full licensure. The BAL Program's goal is to provide that same opportunity in Berkshire. Philosophically, the BAL Program is based upon three essential ideas about teaching and learning: first, a commitment to providing qualified, enthusiastic, confident, and dedicated teachers for K-12 children in classrooms in the southeast; second, a

recognition of life experiences of adults who seek to become teachers; third, the belief that the teaching profession rests upon specialized knowledge and skills and that this knowledge and these skills require instruction, guidance, reflection, and practice in order to be adequately developed. Thus, the two colleges have developed a program that addresses a critical need, values partnership, and maintains the integrity of the profession. In addition, it provides networking, mentoring, and support. BAL licensure areas include middle, secondary and K-12 certification (The College, 2007).

Phil Parkes

Phil Parkes is a 54 year old, male, first year lateral entry, Caucasian, Culinary Arts teacher at the Independent School. He recalls the types of work his father was employed in during his childhood and he offers this depiction of himself growing up. “I grew up middle-class although mother always-worked dad always had a job and a half. He started out as a cop and their benefits were not good. I grew up in a middle-class small-town of 15,000 people in Northern New Jersey 4 miles from The George Washington Bridge into New York City.” He refers to the socio-economic transition that he made. “ Between my wife and myself we moved into probably upper-middle-class.” He goes on to describe his educational background and mobility as a student. “I went to high school in New Jersey. I went to college in Staten Island New York for biology then Charleston, South Carolina for a BA in occupational science degree in culinary arts.”

Mr. Parkes explains that teaching was not his first career of choice:

I worked in food manufacturing in New Jersey 15 years. I then worked in food service for 15 years. I didn't start out to be a teacher, because prior to doing this I worked the better part of 32 years. When I got out of college the first time, I didn't

quite know exactly what I was going to do.

He reflects on the various pathways that his career has taken in more detail:

The last company I was with them for 11 years. In 1991, I was downsized...and had a reduction in the workforce...anyway didn't quite know what I was going to do. I had a brainstorm that I shared with my wife. It was to pull the kids out of school, they were in elementary school at the time, sell the house, have her quit her job, we were living in Pennsylvania, and move to Charleston South Carolina so I could go to school. So after about six months we finally agreed that maybe it was a good idea. We moved down there I went to Thames. My second time through college was much better than my first time through college. I then started working with a contract food manufacturer and provider, not restaurants but worked with college food services at a number of different locations, [such as] Southern University. We moved to North Carolina, I took a transfer, and worked at the University of Hillingford, Chester University, School of the Arts in Whittington. Due to some personal issues, demands on my time from the new district manager, I said I've had enough I resigned. Didn't know exactly what I was going to do, took a job with another contractor, food service provider, they lost the contract I was hired on by the people who won the contract at a couple of new locations but it still wasn't the answer.

A further inspiration for Mr. Parkes to become a teacher is associated with the motivation of his family and other influential people in his life:

Both of my daughters are teaching now...certain teachers have impacted my life. Some of it goes back to junior high school, with some of the teachers that I had. One of them I bumped into about eight years ago, obviously I have been out of high school for more than eight years.

Phil Parkes explains how he made the transition from the food industry into teaching:

I heard about the Independent School opening and what they were up to and I knew enough about lateral entry...so I applied for it. I had never formally taught before, just things that I had to do related to work, policies and programs. There again, talking to your employees [there] is a big difference there.

He goes on to illustrate how he could continue to utilize the skills and knowledge that he had acquired in his career of choice, at the same time describing what motivated him to chose teaching as a profession.

A lot of it is personal as far as life has been good to me and I want to give back. I felt that this was a way that I could maybe make an impact on someone, hopefully more than someone. I suppose rather than be remembered for "wow he made a great salad." So I wanted to share some of my experiences with students.

Phil Parkes has explored the possibilities and opportunities that would enable him to pursue his goal of becoming a teacher. His response suggests that he gave a tremendous amount of thought to the idea but took his time in finalizing his decision.

I basically knew that lateral entry was possible. Over the last couple of years the thought had crossed my mind from what I was able to gather through the school districts website, and then also related to the other websites such as US Teach and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) website. There was information there, and there are a number of different ways to go about getting into teaching and getting licensed.

He offers details of his licensure requirements. "I am working towards my licensure... DPI sponsors the training sessions." As a lateral entry teacher he states that he needs, "12 credit hours plus the 80 hour in-service component," in order to receive his full teacher license.

Over the academic year through my frequent meetings, classroom visits and observations with Phil Parkes I have come to know him extremely well. I now understand why he took his time making the decision to transition into teaching. Some would accuse him of being slow to make a decision, yet I would argue that he is particularly

methodical, precise and displays a desire to want to get things right. I believe he is right to take his time in making important decisions that will impact either himself or those around him. I witness him providing the catering along with students from his class during the presentation evening for the senior projects. He is wearing his culinary arts attire and is so focused on providing the very best in terms of service to the parents, faculty and students that are present. He has always told me upon my visits to his classroom whether as an observer or mentor, "It always good to see you." I feel the sincerity in his voice and when I give him advice in terms as to how he can improve his teaching he avidly makes notes, which I know he is going to look back on and take heed of. I share with him the fact that he now has the presence of a veteran teacher in terms of the relationships that he has developed with the students, faculty and parents but most evidently in terms of his classroom presence. He is now more relaxed, has a jovial manner and when I observe him teaching there is an abundance of evidence to support the fact that he actually enjoys what he does. It is obvious to me that the students can also see this. He has developed such a rapport with the students that his classroom is truly a pleasant place to be.

Sally Sparsit

Sally Sparsit is a 24 year old, female, first year lateral entry, Caucasian, Science teacher at the Independent School. I first encountered Ms. Sparsit in her classroom during a site visit to the school in the fall of 2006. She is a very shy and reserved teacher who does not really appear to have much to say. She identifies herself as "middle class upper-middle-class," and lives at home with her parents. She was a student at a local high

school and was a former student of the current school administrator. She attended the University of Kingsland as an undergraduate in biology. She is now working on her teaching license in biology as a lateral entry teacher. When asked about her inspiration to become a teacher she states:

For my whole life I didn't want to be a teacher because my whole family is. So I tried to stay away from that. But when I was in college I realized that was what I wanted to do, I just wasn't ready to change my major. So once I graduated I said okay this is what I'm going to do but now I have to do it lateral entry.

It is obvious that Ms. Sparsit thoughtfully planned how she was going to secure her full teaching license in as short a time as possible. Prior to starting teaching in the fall of 2006 she had already taken many of the classes that she would need for full licensure. She credits the BAL Program as she describes how she spent five weeks of the previous summer:

I will have my full license by the end of this academic year. Last summer I did the BAL 18-hour program. I took a 3 credit hour pedagogy class in the fall and I am finishing up the in-service requirement for my license.

At the time that I initially interviewed Ms. Sparsit for this study I had observed her classroom teaching many times and had seen her interacting with students and other faculty in the hallways and during lunch on numerous occasions. I recall Creswell's (1998) point that the "shy interviewee may present the researcher with a challenge and less than adequate data" (p. 124). Essentially this is what occurred. The interview with Ms. Sparsit was the shortest in terms of time when compared to the other participants in the study. Her responses to some of the questions were limited to the extent that some

were initially “yes’ or “no” responses. This is where I had to “Provide an opportunity for participants to make additional comments... Try to separate fact from fiction by asking follow-up questions.” Sagor (2000, p. 106). I used a list of follow-up questions and prompts in order to clarify certain points and gain additional evidence and data.

Over the course of the academic year Ms. Sparsit has become a little less shy, and her confidence in her abilities as a classroom teacher has continually emerged. She makes a valid contribution to the monthly seminars that are held at the Independent School for new teachers and she has become much more assertive in her overall approach. She is no longer afraid to give her opinion and will speakout if she feels strongly about something. I believe that some of her personality traits have developed along with her growth as a teacher and she has become particularly creative in providing students with a variety of activities by incorporating various strategies into her classroom teaching. What intrigues me the most about her is that even though she speaks very softly she is able to get the students’ attention. She is quiet, yet always smiling and has established positive relationships with the students and faculty. When I first met with Ms. Sparsit on an individual basis and asked her if she needed anything in terms of resources she would often simply say “no.” However, now she will ask for my help with securing resources and materials or she will ask for suggestions that will help her achieve her goals.

Nelly Trent

Ms. Trent is a 27 year old, female, first year lateral entry, Asian, Math teacher at the Independent School. I was introduced to Ms. Trent in her classroom during a site visit to the school and although she smiled when I met her she appeared a little nervous. I later

came to learn that this nervousness came from the fact that she felt totally overwhelmed by her teaching assignment. She is very shy and self-effacing, and I believe that some of the students are of the opinion that they can take advantage of this. From the initial conversations that I had with Ms. Trent she states that the students ridiculed her because of her accent. They made comments about the fact that she pronounces some words differently from themselves and they even tried to tell her that they did not understand her even though it is evident from speaking with Ms. Trent that her communication skills are excellent.

Ms. Trent does not come from an economically privileged family, and clearly the value of doing well in school and continuing onto college is a means for her to be successful and move beyond her childhood economic environment:

I grew up in Vietnam so my parents are working class. I remember when I was back home I had to help my parents out because they had a small business, not like owning it or anything, they sell cookies and stuff like that so we started off as working class my parents are still working class.

Despite the force of such testimony, it is important to appreciate that the working and living conditions of people vary between families and cultures considerably. Ms. Trent speaks about the move her family made from Vietnam to the USA and her subsequent education.

We came over here in 93, I was 13, I went to high school here eighth grade and then I graduated from the adjacent high school. After that I went to the University of Surrey and then turned from that to the University of Berkshire. My major has always been Math so I graduated with a BS in pure math at UNB in 2003.

Furthermore she offers this information in terms of supporting herself through college as an employee at a gas station.

At that time I was still working at the gas station like managing decisions. I was a swing manager then I became a store manager. After they transferred ownership I put an application for the local school district. Two weeks after I put it in I got hired. So after that I got the job. I went to one of those meetings where you talk to principals and stuff. So then they sent me to this school.

Ms. Trent is a particularly intelligent teacher and knows what it takes to get the job done. She aspires to taking masters level classes. “I have not been in graduate school, planning on it just don't know when.” She explains that would also like to explore other possibilities later in her career. “When I get my certified license I will be certified in high school math, hopefully I will do middle school also because I would like to try middle.”

When one thinks of Ms. Trent, the word nurturing comes to mind and although she sometimes finds her current teaching assignment challenging she explains that, “I've always wanted to be a teacher since I was a kid. I am the oldest in the family and I take care of a lot [of children] so teaching seems to...[Pause]...I was there already.” She takes pride in her family heritage explaining that children in her own culture are much more respectful of adults. When asked what motivated or inspired her to become a teacher she responds:

When I was back home my sixth grade math teacher, he's a great teacher, he influenced me a whole lot and I don't think in my whole life that I will ever forget him. He inspired me, but I always wanted to be a teacher. But here [the USA], it's sort of different so I didn't know how it would turn out.

Ms. Trent calls to mind how she learned of the lateral entry program.

I learned about it when I was in college. When I came to UNB I was aware of the program. I knew that if I had half of the math, I still have that three years to complete and get my degree. So I knew even with a math degree I could teach. Then I'll just do my licensure while I teach.

She mentions that she did initially begin the traditional route into the teaching profession but then changed her mind. "I did start on it...[Pause]...but and then I just quit on it...no reason. After I start taking it just too much stuff happening and I just went for the easy route, pure math." As a lateral entry teacher Ms. Trent refers to the requirements she needs for licensure in the state. "I need twelve credits. One math, one method, and two education classes."

Ms. Trent has accomplished so much this academic year as she has developed as a first year teacher. Not only have other people noticed and commented on it, but more importantly she also recognizes this herself. As the interview draws to a close she reflected on the year so far, "I have become a better teacher. Knowing everybody here is lateral entry helps. I know I have grown a lot. The year is almost over and I'm still here. I am amazed and I am proud of myself." I can see the emotion that emerges with this sincere statement. Indeed, she has everything to be proud of. From transitioning from a nervous teacher who told me that she went to the office and was ready to resign on her second day to someone that now says smilingly, "So far I am loving it."

Much of the development of these novice teachers lends itself to their experiences. Yet the context of their experiences is also important when one considers how indeed the beginning teachers in this study have transitioned through the first year teacher phases. They have all told their personal stories that are evidently set in the

context of their current teaching assignment.

Summary

Chapter IV presented the demographic information of the six lateral entry Beginning Teacher Is, and one Beginning Teacher II participants selected for this study. In Chapter V the data analysis and findings of the study that relate to the expectations and realities of teaching, orientation, mentoring, resources, collegial support, parental support, and district level support received and desired by the beginning teachers will be presented.

CHAPTER V

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

In the previous chapter, the demographic and biographic information of the participants were presented. The central purpose of this case study was to determine the beginning teacher perceptions of the mentoring and induction program within their school district. More specifically, this chapter will focus on the data analysis and findings of the study that relate to the expectations and realities of teaching, orientation, mentoring, resources, collegial support, parental support, and district level support received and desired by the beginning teachers will be presented as a thorough discussion of the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers and their perceptions of the support they receive.

This chapter presents the data and findings as they relate to the four research questions in narrative form. It is intended to present the perceptions of each of the participants in terms of their teaching experiences during the school year 2006-2007 and demonstrate the ways in which they have dealt with the various situations they have encountered. No study of beginning teachers can fail to appreciate the crucial role that the induction and mentoring process plays in the lives of new teachers. The support that beginning teachers receive performs a fundamental role in the lives of these participants.

Using these concerns as a foundation, this study used interviews, observations, and field-notes to assess the perceptions of beginning teachers of the mentoring and induction process. The data provided are extraordinary, and it will be seen that the participants' testimonies of their experiences are detailed, remarkable and of the utmost

value. The evidence presented offers a different and unusual perspective than that which is found in secondary sources.

After the initial open-ended statement “Tell me the story of how you became a teacher,” which was presented in the previous chapter participants were asked “Is teaching what you expected it to be?” The overall response to this question was positive. These findings suggest a high level of satisfaction with the expectations of these participants. It is reassuring to note that although these teachers recognized that their teaching assignments presented numerous challenges, they remained resolute in their approach to teaching.

Realities and Expectations of the Teaching Profession

Many teachers new to the teaching profession hold an idealistic view of the role and expectations of a classroom teacher. This is even more apparent in the case of beginning lateral entry teachers, as they have not been exposed to the student teaching classroom experience. After a short amount of time in the classroom these idealistic views and expectations typically change considerably, as the realities of teaching soon become evident.

When I asked Ms. Allen “Is teaching what you expected it to be?” she stated:

It's a little harder than I expected it to be, oh no I shouldn't say harder it is more time-consuming. But what I get back from the kids is even better than I thought it was going to be. When I see the kids coming up and asking questions in class and actually seem interested in what I'm talking about that's when it's even better. So and I do like that I like the atmosphere of teaching. But yes it's a lot it's not like it's not an eight until four job it's not even a Monday through Friday job so I knew it would be more but I guess I didn't realize how much more you know so when you say teachers don't make that much they have you go well gosh it's not a horrible sounding salary but if you break that down per hour it would probably be

less than the minimum wage. So yes because if you say you know 35 or 40 45 [thousand dollars] it doesn't sound that bad but the amount of hours that you have to put in. I'm getting paid in the summer for what I've done this year but I'm still going to be working in the summer so definitely the time it's huge not like I expected outside of the class room and there's a lot of that.

Ms. Allen found that a lot of her time is taken up with activities outside of the classroom. "Then the grading will come and there's always going to be lesson planning but yet things like you should be contacting ex-amount of parents per week." She referred to a meeting that she had been asked to attend. "I was asked to go to the board of education meeting, so then there's another couple of hours of my time that you're not quite counting on having to spend." As Ms. Allen reflected on extra activities that she had been asked to participate in she also stated how she believed this had helped her develop as a teacher.

Ms. Allen described some of the likes and dislikes of her job. "I like working with kids. I like being able to teach them something, and I like to see the look on people's faces when they learn something new." She also referred to the personal satisfaction that she gets from teaching. "I like how it makes me feel. I like giving others the power of knowledge, I know that sounds kind of corny but the more you know you'll just get along better in the whole world." She also mentioned that she had formed relationships with the students and is concerned about their wellbeing. "These kids have become like...I worry about them you know and I like that."

Ms. Bray also explained her initial fears of the teaching profession and her expectations for the future:

Although I've heard the negative side of teaching, I was afraid it was going to be really horrible in the classroom but it wasn't, not for me and it isn't now. But then I've heard the other side, a lot of the positives, but I've still yet to experience some of the upside of teaching but I feel that comes with experience.

As Ms. Bray reflected on her first year of teaching she felt that she was finally doing what she wanted to do in terms of her career and teaching a subject that she has a devotion to:

So far my teaching experience has been overall I would say a good one because I enjoy what I do because it's in the field that I've been trying to get in anyway. I love to teach others whether it's an adult or child, anyone how to accomplish something that you are going to need in the future. If I was teaching something else it probably would be a whole different story.

She vividly expressed her feelings in terms of how she felt as a novice teacher and how she implemented a survival strategy to deal with the challenging situation at the Independent School.

It's almost like you're thrown out in the water and if you don't know how to swim you quickly learn or you drown. So at some point I've felt like that, but I've swam so I wouldn't drown. I've never been to the point, even though it's been difficult dealing with disciplinary things, which all schools have, all teachers' experience, of giving up.

Phil Parkes also stated that he was pleased with his choice of profession but suggested that some things had been trial and error for him and that he was learning along with the students:

There's been a lot of "on-the-job training." The students will ask you a question and inside you are thinking, "I have no idea," and on the outside you are trying not to give the wrong information. But they ask you a question looking for

expertise and sometimes can catch you off guard. I found that the best way is to say “I don't know but I'll find out and get back to you.”

Of all of the interview participants, Phil Parkes was the teacher the most focused on instructional concerns like planning, assessing, and integrating subjects across the curriculum. He stated that “a lot of the issues that occur in English, History, Math, Science, they occur in my class.” He worked through instructional problems using a variety of strategies, including asking his colleagues for help, trying various approaches, and being flexible with his lesson plans if necessary.

The majority of the participants indicated that teaching is what they expected it to be. Stories from family members had provided some insight into the expectations of teaching, which led to an acceptance that teaching is challenging, and at times frustrating. Some of the participants found planning difficult and reported that it took up a lot of their time. Several of the beginning teachers mentioned the need to be available for the students and having to make time to do the numerous other things that they are asked to do at the Independent School such as attending meetings and cover classes when a colleague is absent.

Orientation

The school district orientation is a three-day program designed to welcome new teachers into the school district. Orientation takes place prior to the start of the new academic school year. The sessions address issues such as instruction, human resources, parent-teacher, and student-teacher relationships, teaching children from poverty, classroom management, and student support services. Guest speakers are invited from the

School of Education's local university so that beginning teachers' are able to hear an independent view of what the realities of teaching are. There are sessions specific for elementary, middle and high school teachers and there is also an allocated time for the teachers to visit their assigned schools.

Ms. Allen reflected thoughtfully on her experiences of orientation:

Orientation was quick it was like a whirlwind I don't know how many days it was but I got home and I was like "did I just get trained to teach an actual class?" There were a lot of good things about it. It was kind of like a quick "here you go." I definitely learned a lot of things it was just fast, it was just so fast that I felt like a lot of things were just an outline I wanted to know so much more and I know they can't do it in that many days. I think the whole orientation thing being as fast as it is and so much information in such a short period of time, although it probably would be really hard to figure out a different way. I walked away from that with definitely some knowledge that ...more kind of the head spinning and then I thought oh my God what am I going to do now? or I need to re read that which we went over today? because we just went over it so fast and I don't have an idea what they're saying.

She went on to explain some of the specific things that she learned at orientation:

We did learn a lot. I like hearing about the situations, the examples that teachers and the people who spoke gave to us. I liked knowing this could happen or that could happen and this is kind of how I dealt with it, but [although] you may be different, at least you know certain things come up. And I think that was helpful but it was such a blur to me.

As Ms. Allen recalled orientation and the first days of school she implied how quickly everything occurred. "I was appointed August 11, [the] 25th was the first day of school and I was in [school] on the 22nd getting my classroom ready?" Once again she alluded to the fact that as a lateral entry teacher she did not have the experience of a traditionally prepared classroom teacher. "I think I came [to school] and tried to figure

out what do you mean getting my classroom ready I'd never had a classroom before.” She also mentioned the financial support that the school district induction office provided for classroom supplies. “We got the induction start cards, which I think were awesome because I used every penny of mine just to get stuff and have since spent probably, twice that.”

Ms. Allen described what she believes should be the features of new teacher induction. “I’d like a little more [than the three day orientation] maybe a week’s worth. There was never enough time for questions. It would also be good if we had a three day or a two day training after the first year where they asked us “What happened?” Mr. Parkes also stated that initially many of the beginning teachers felt at a disadvantage, as six of the seven novice teachers were all lateral entry. “At one point we were all floundering as we are all lateral entry teachers, so more classroom management would have been helpful at the beginning.” Ms. Bray agreed with Ms. Allen as she mentioned that in terms of new teacher induction, “There should be more training in the beginning, more orientation days.” She considered that the new teacher orientation was a lot of information.

Though I learned a lot, I felt it was way too fast, too much information in three days to get into and be teaching by the next week. Way too much information to take in and feel like I was confident to do the job. It [orientation] was a lot of information, a lot of guidelines and procedures and many things to take in and so three days to me was not enough to be confident to do the job and to feel like I could do what I needed to do.

When I asked Ms. Allen what she believed are the benefits of induction programs, she responded that it gave her “confidence.” She explained that “it helped” in dealing

with specific situations, and that when she faced particular incidents she reflected on the induction program and thought “ok I knew that.” She stated that she needed “rules” from the county and help with “learning about the Standard Course of Study...pacing guides. She admitted that without all of these support structures “I wouldn’t have had a clue.” Phil Parkes agreed with Ms. Allen about the benefits of induction programs. He found that the induction programs provided a foundation for a beginning teacher:

It gets all new teachers off on the same foot. They’ve heard it. I talked to other teachers at the adjacent high school and asked questions such as, “How’s this and that work?” We’ve all gone through the same. What the school district offer is a very organized program.

Ms. Bray also described how the school district induction program had helped her as a novice teacher:

As a new teacher I had the opportunity to gain knowledge in classroom management and resources and things that otherwise I would not have been aware of. I think this is how things should be. There are also networking opportunities to meet people and get telephone numbers to call.

Many of the participants in this case study found that there was a lot of information given at orientation. Mr. Parkes stressed that the timing issues were crucial in his development as a beginning lateral entry teacher:

I think everybody who was involved from when I was hired was great, was really terrific. However the timing from when I knew officially that I was hired, and from when I started orientation was about four days and that's just a timing issue. There was a lot of information given through orientation, and now with being able to go back to some of it, it makes a little more sense. Again I understand that there is a lot of stuff that has to be given there were so many teachers, I wasn't alone. I wouldn't wish that whole hiring process on anybody, to hire the five or six

hundred brand new teachers this year, I don't know what the exact number was but to get everyone on board, and there were a lot of lateral entry teachers, there is a lot of paperwork there too.

Mr. Parkes reported that the first few months of the school being open were overwhelming for everyone. He referred to some of the training that he believes would have helped him as a lateral entry teacher particularly in terms of classroom management.

In some of the training that we had, we did a lot more on the curriculum than the classroom management and each one is important. But for a beginning, the lateral entry teacher, I had the big fat binder, the standard course of study for both the classes, but the classroom management part was the part that was tripping me up. The different learning styles, the different teaching styles, and reacting to them because hindsight is always 20/20. But with some of the issues I had and the lack of ability to be able to manage the classroom, recognize how to keep the students engaged, it really didn't matter what you were trying to teach. I could have gotten up there and read a book, people wouldn't have paid attention or I wouldn't have been unable to get through it. I remember a comment that I made that I really felt at a loss. We kept hearing about classroom management, engagement and curriculum be darned, but you can read that out of the book this is what we have to cover, but how do you present it and how do you get everybody involved in the classroom? It is at least 50% of that too. I would have liked classroom management in September, again getting through another all-day training, but getting through some of those pieces would have helped. I know there was some material in the orientation binder but with all the other information we had, I don't think I found it until December.

Mr. Parkes agreed with Ms. Allen and Ms. Bray as he explained that he had received a lot of information at new teacher orientation. He also reported that in terms of the documentation provided at Orientation, no one had specifically pointed out relevant issues on classroom management from the notebook which all of the lateral entry teachers had received.

It was the unknown, sitting here in month six I am saying “I could have used that piece earlier.” It might have been there the whole time, but I was so focused on these and other areas that I missed it. I admit I probably could have missed it.

Once again he referred to how he would have liked to have more guidance as a lateral entry teacher on the use of all of the documents that he received at orientation.

They don't tell you how to work with it or how to get it on, they just tell you this is how it is to be done and you're on your own trying to figure it out. I would like more guidance on the lateral entry teacher.

The interviews offered data that orientation is provided to new teachers within the school district. In this study, all of the teachers' had attended the required three-day orientation. One lateral entry teacher had been hired late, after the first day of orientation, therefore she had to complete a make up session in order to fulfill the three-day orientation requirement. In addition all of the lateral entry teachers in this case study had completed the required notebook that is part of the additional seven-day orientation mandated by the school district for lateral entry teachers.

When describing their experiences with orientation, the participants made specific comments that illustrated their anxiety with the length of time that the orientation lasted. There were commonalities among the participants in terms of their perceptions of new teacher orientation. The length and timing of the orientation process were mentioned by three of the participants. The teachers stated that there was a lot of information given at orientation. Ms. Allen said “Orientation was quick it was like a whirlwind I don't know how many days it was but I got home and I was like did I just get trained to teach an actual class.” Ms. Bray agreed with Ms. Allen and talked about the fact that orientation

was only three days and it was a lot of information. She stated that she learned a lot yet she felt it was way too fast, too much information in three days to get into and be teaching by the next week and feeling confident to do the job.

Many of the lateral entry teachers hold mixed views about the orientation process because of the minimal amount of time that was spent covering so many issues. The majority of the frustrations described by the teachers are directly related to the timing of orientation. As noted by several participants, the orientation process was too fast and left some of the teachers feeling inadequately prepared for their role as a classroom teacher.

Interview data indicated that all of the teachers had received a site-based orientation. Typically either the school administrator or the Induction Coordinator gives new teachers a site-based orientation at the school. This site-based orientation varies from school to school but generally consists of a tour of the school buildings, reviewing the school handbook of policies and procedures; time in the teachers allocated classroom and information on how to secure resources and classroom materials.

Mentoring

Typically beginning teachers are given a mentor, yet my assignment to work with the teachers at the Independent School as an induction coach emerged from the fact that the mentor network had not been clearly established with the adjacent school. Therefore, the novice teachers were not receiving their entitlement in terms of mentoring support from the school district. Thus, it was a concern of the central office administrators that another support structure needed to be in place in an effort to increase the support for the new teachers at the Independent School.

Ms. Allen described what she perceived she needed in terms of support when setting up her classroom:

I would have liked somebody to kind of tell me how to set up my classroom and not just talk about seating plans. I think I would have liked a little more just you know what do I do in here. What do I do with this big empty space? how do I make it somewhere where the kids want to come? that kind of thing.

Ms. Allen's concerns about the lack of assistance in setting up her classroom would normally be addressed by a mentor, however as can be seen from the following statement there have been problems establishing an effective mentoring support network at the Independent School. Her first mentor is a teacher at the adjacent high school. She agreed to mentor Ms. Allen but failed to meet with her on a regular basis and provided no mentoring support whatsoever. She appeared at Ms. Allen's classroom door one day and stated, "I am your mentor," but Ms. Allen never saw her again after this initial introduction. Ms. Allen described how she believed the mentoring program would meet her specific needs.

My first mentor was not really a mentor, and it's been a little more difficult because I mostly communicate by e-mail with mine. The person I have now is wonderful. Some of the other teachers have not had the best mentor either. Some of the mentors are excited about being mentors they can be a little overkill that way too. For me I like the idea of a mentor to be somebody I can just e-mail every week or if I have a problem then I can say, "hey listen I would love to meet with you for like 20 minutes this week," but not something necessarily mandatory that you have to do every week. If things are going well there's not really much to talk about you know I'd rather have it be like that.

Ms. Bray also indicated that she had difficulties with her first mentor as she shared her experience of the mentoring process:

I have a mentor I had one mentor initially during the first semester and I did not have a good experience with that mentor and I wasn't learning anything. We would meet for maybe five minutes and our discussions were nothing to do the things that I really needed to learn and so I requested another mentor and I did receive another mentor who was very helpful. Actually that is the reason why I think I've pretty much started receiving and requesting the right resources from the right people is because of that mentor giving me what I needed, and leading me, pointing me towards the person or the people that I needed to talk to so it's been helpful. I don't have lots of contact with him, as I would like to. We email each other periodically he checks on me to see if I need anything. My mentor is at another site he is no where near this school. He's somewhere in another town so we basically agreed to communicate via e-mail or telephone. Pretty much if I need anything I can call him and say, "okay this is what I need." But sometimes you get busy you try to figure it out on your own because you know time.

Ms. Bray agreed with Ms. Allen as she described what her preference would be in terms of the mentoring process:

I really think that my preference would be to have a mentor who was available to me on a daily basis or weekly basis to come and meet with me that way we could spend time. I think that would be more beneficial for me. To have that one on one "I'm going to meet you lets talk about this I need to see you have contact with you."

Both Ms. Allen and Ms. Bray suggested that they needed a mentor to help in the setting up of their classrooms at the start of the school year. Ms. Bray also indicated that she would have liked help in securing necessary resources and classroom materials. "I was unaware that I needed a teacher computer until one or two months into the semester."

Ms. Bray mentioned how she would like to see changes to the mentoring process:

The way I picture it is that new teachers are given mentors or find mentors but as far as the accountability for mentors I don't think it's really truly there. I think it's up to the mentor once they are assigned to make that contact and go through what is necessary. But I don't think as far as accountability and anybody really monitoring what is being mentored and if [there's] no type of assessment if what

we hope as mentees to get out of that mentoring session if we're getting that so I just think that needs to be looked at a little more closely.

Ms. Crupp stated that she was happy with the support that she received from her mentor in the first semester. However due to scheduling issues she explained that she had not met with her as often during the second semester:

Right now I haven't been meeting with my mentor as much but last semester I was on a different schedule and we were able to work out things a little bit better. But she's great, I mean she's still great to me. I mean she's very supportive in everything that I do, anything that I have a question about she will tell me, anything that I need to know, very inviting about the materials. The resources that the adjacent high school have for us to use and she is always looking out for me. It's kind of like a big sister mentor thing.

Mr. Parkes also had a successful experience in terms of the mentoring process and indicated that the support he received from his mentor was helpful to him as a beginning lateral entry teacher:

Meeting with my mentor in my case is really good. I have a good mentor and meet with her on a weekly basis. She taught the class for eight or nine years. It was the same situation, lateral entry into it. So we can kind of compare notes, not to do the same thing that she always did, but because there are only two locations in the county, another high school in the school district and here, where there are people teaching the same thing.

He mentioned that he had found it useful that his mentor understood his situation as a lateral entry teacher as she had been in the same situation some years earlier. He also indicated that as the Independent School was small and there is only one other local school in the district where Culinary Arts is taught. Therefore, support in terms of subject knowledge was proving difficult. "You don't have a lot of peers that you can discuss

things with.”

Phil Parkes appeared to be taking a proactive role in his own professional development as a beginning teacher seeking out opportunities to collaborate with professionals outside of his own teaching environment.

Ms. Sparsit identified the extent of support that she had received from her mentor:

People have been pretty helpful I haven't seen my mentor very much. She's in another subject area so she can't help me with that, but she does help me with the classroom management we do talk about things like that. She can offer suggestions for meeting the parents, going to make home visits.

She indicated that the value of her mentor had been somewhat limited as they did not teach in the same subject area.

Ms. Trent agreed with Phil Parkes as she reported that she had received instructional support from her mentor as her mentor taught the same subject:

My mentor has helped me a lot because she taught the same subject that I'm teaching, well one of it. So she told me that I can use her stuff which is good because that means it's going to limit me from one that I have to teach or prepare for because as you know I have three classes every semester so every day is really hard. So she is really helping me by letting me know I can use her stuff.

However, Ms. Trent had the same scheduling issues that Ms. Crupp had in terms of trying to meet with her mentor second semester and thus had not met with her mentor often.

Open-ended responses to the interview questions provide further understanding of the mentoring experiences of the participants in this study. These responses were coded and the data was compared across the beginning teachers. When asked what types of support the participants consider that they need as a beginning teacher, all of the teachers

indicated that they needed support from a mentor. They perceived mentor support in the areas of classroom management, instructional and non-instructional duties, curriculum and instruction, assessment and evaluation, reflection and self-assessment.

Several participants indicated that their mentor was available “whenever I need him/her.” While there were varying accounts of beginning teachers meeting with their mentors “weekly,” “rarely,” or “never.” Some participants expressed frustration with the lack of structure of the mentoring process.

All of the teachers in this group revealed to varying degrees the extent of mentoring support they had received. Ms. Trent said that her mentor had helped her a lot as she at least taught some of the same subject content that Ms. Trent was currently teaching. Therefore her mentor had allowed her access to her resources which meant she had less planning to do. Ms. Trent found this helpful as she explained “As you know I have three classes every semester so every day is really hard. So she is really helping me by letting me know I can use her stuff...she let me be aware of it also, so she's very helpful.”

Phil Parkes said that his mentor was available to him at anytime and that they met regularly every Thursday at 8:00am. He recognized that not all of the teachers had successful mentoring situations as he explained “Meeting with my mentor in my case is really good.” He was aware that his mentors knowledge and experience of teaching the same subject content that he was now teaching was helpful to him. His mentor had taught the class for eight or nine years previously and had also been a lateral entry teacher. Therefore, Mr. Parkes found that she was able to support him in terms of content and the

experiences of a lateral entry teacher. Because there are only two locations in the county, where Culinary Arts is taught, Mr. Parkes found that he did not have a sufficient number of people that he could go to for instructional support. He said, “You don't have a lot of peers that you can discuss things with.”

Ms. Crupp and Ms. Trent reported that during the second semester they had not been meeting with their mentors as much as they had during the first semester due to scheduling difficulties. Nevertheless, Ms. Crupp still felt that the support that she did receive from her mentor was beneficial. “She's very supportive in everything that I do anything that I have a question about she will tell me, anything that I need to know, very inviting about the materials.” Ms. Crupp also indicated that her mentor sought out resources from the adjacent school for her use and found that “it's kind of like a big sister mentor thing. She had a good relationship with her mentor and stated that, “I wish I could keep her the whole three years that I have to have one because she's wonderful.” She perceived that her mentor was very caring and loving and always wanted to be there for her.

Ms. Copperfield said that she found it helpful to have a mentor and that her mentor had sent her written documentation about professional development courses that she thought Ms. Copperfield would benefit from. However, like Ms. Crupp and Ms. Trent, she also mentioned that she too had difficulties arranging to meet with her mentor due to scheduling differences.

The support that Ms. Sparsit received from her mentor was not as effective as she would have liked it to be. One of things that she continually mentioned that she would

have found helpful as a beginning lateral entry teacher was a mentor in the same subject area as herself. In addition she explained on several occasions that she wanted subject specific help with manipulatives and other science ideas. Ms. Sparsit found limited support from her mentor as she explained, “She's in another subject area so she can't help me with that.” However, she stated that she did receive support from her mentor in terms of classroom management. But then she indicated the lack of support that she had received from her mentor recently and how infrequently she had met with her mentor. “She said she hasn't been lately. I haven't seen her for a couple of months.”

Both Ms. Bray's and Ms. Allen's experiences of the mentoring situation at the Independent School had initially been unsuccessful. Ms. Bray had asked the induction coach to locate a new mentor for her in October when she found the mentor that she had been assigned of little use. However, she explained that she believed that it was because of her new mentor that she had now started receiving and requesting the right resources from the right people. She found that her new mentor was giving her what she needed as a beginning teacher and stated that he was “leading me pointing me towards the person or the people that I needed to talk to so it's been helpful.” Nevertheless, Ms. Bray also mentioned that she did not have as much contact with her mentor as she would have liked to. “We email each other periodically he checks on me to see if I need anything.” She explained that as her mentor was at another school site and nowhere near the Independent School they had agreed to communicate via email or telephone. Ms. Bray found that due to the difficulties with access to her mentor she had tried to figure out many of the issues that ordinarily a teacher would seek advice from her mentor on by herself. She also stated

that she would have preferred to have a mentor who was available to her on a daily basis or weekly basis to come and meet with her. She indicated that she would have found the mentoring process to be more beneficial had she had one on one contact with her mentor.

Ms. Allen also faced a similar mentoring experience to Ms. Bray “My first mentor was not really a mentor.” She too had established an email mentoring process in order to receive mentoring support. However, she did find the mentor she had now to be helpful. “The person I have now is wonderful every time I have a question she takes care of it.” Even so, Ms. Allen’s mentor is also at a school a considerable distance from the Independent School.

Although Ms. Allen perceived that eventually her mentoring experience was useful to her, according to the school district policy guidelines beginning teachers are supposed to meet face to face with their mentors for at least 20 minutes per week. The mentoring process at the Independent School had been problematic from the outset. Best practice suggests that teachers need a mentor that is an experienced teacher and teaches the same subject content as the mentee. The interviews conducted for this study certainly offer some insight into the mentoring process that was established at the Independent School. The participants provide evidence of the variety of ways in which the beginning teachers dealt with the mentoring situations that proved successful or otherwise. However, the mentoring process was evidently a major challenge for the beginning teachers at the Independent School.

There is a good deal of central office documentary evidence to suggest that the school district provided support to beginning teachers in the form of a mentor. However,

as the Independent School was new and all of the teachers except one were new, there were no obvious mentors located at the Independent School to assign to the new teachers. It was stated by the school district that they were attempting to locate mentors from the adjacent high school but in September 2006 this was proving difficult. A list of potential mentors had been sent to the Independent School's administrator and she advised the new teachers of the names and email addresses of their mentors. In addition to being assigned a mentor, beginning teachers are supposed to be provided with a "Buddy Teacher." This is an unpaid position that offers novice teachers further support that is supplementary to the mentor. None of the beginning teachers in this case study were assigned a Buddy Teacher.

Resources

An additional concern for Ms. Bray as a novice teacher was the lack of resources that she had available to her. As the Independent School was new there were no resources in the building for any of the teachers.

As a CTE teacher the problem is that I encountered when I came in is just not having access to the things that I needed to be able to give my students the opportunity to learn different pieces of the material, resources, equipment and things like that. So I felt that like if these things were in place or if I had a proper ...and knew exactly who to contact... just someone to guide me... "This is what you need to do. If you don't have this, if you don't have this resource or material there's a contact person," so that I would have had all the things that I needed to be able to be successful. I have been teaching now what is this second semester and I have just received quite a few of the resources that I needed and we are already halfway into the term. I didn't have any of these last semester I don't know her actual title the person that handles technical services resources we have a department that actually handles all requests for all of that and requests have been sent, not right at the very beginning because I had no idea, had no clue that I was supposed to have this and I could have this and so I didn't have a clue that I could have these resources so now this CTE coordinator or I don't know what her title is

but she has supplied me with most of the resources that I have received in the last few days but I know that the CTE department is responsible for any type of equipment, high-value equipment that we need in our classrooms. I couldn't give you the exact date but it was roughly around October when I requested these things I just received the things that I really needed yesterday and a few pieces a couple of weeks ago.

It can be seen from the above statement that the lack of resources was a feasible concern for Ms. Bray. As a Computer Applications teacher there were numerous pieces of equipment that she required for her classroom. Her major concerns were related to student achievement and instruction as she felt that she had to provide students with everything that they needed in order to ensure their success.

Ms. Crupp also explained what she would have liked in terms of support from the school district as a beginning teacher particularly in terms of resources being available to new teachers at a new school:

One of the things I think we could have had from the school district, and I'm saying is only because I've worked in other schools and I see what other schools have as far as materials. One of the downs of working in this school is not having access to the materials a copier machine that can do transparencies or a laminating machine. We are limited on storage space and supplies for the most part. I felt like someone could have donated a laminating machine. I kind of feel cheated with my teaching experience where I have had to scrounge around and work with what I have when I see next door they pretty much have everything. It's like, "Can I use this? Can I borrow this?" It's like "I'm sort of kind is scared you might break this." But many of us had to go out of our own pockets to get a lot of things for this school. And I'm not complaining but I'm pretty sure there are other schools in The State that have the same problem. I just feel like the money for this school could have came a lot quicker knowing that this was a new school. I mean the space, I'm happy with this space as far as my classroom, its just access to the materials.

Mr. Parkes responded in a similar manner as he referred to how it had been

difficult securing resources and how the fact that the school was new had proved problematic in finding out about a various of issues he had encountered as a beginning teacher:

I really don't have anything to base it on but a couple of the classes I am taking, some of the people seemed to know how a textbook is procured, how equipment is procured. I don't know that information obviously some of these people have been in their positions for a while, but a lot of them are brand new teachers taking the classes that I am taking, for the same reasons that I'm taking the classes while teaching, as far as a requirement. They have either in school people who've been there for a while who can give them the answers, or they know exactly who they can get that information from. Whereas in our school we don't have a history, we don't have report card from the state web site, so a lot of the information is non-existent. I know through talking to my daughters, in certain things we are definitely ahead of their districts, in a couple of areas and we do get a little more one on one contact.

However, he concluded that from conversations with other teachers the one-on-one contact that he had received had been more than is offered in terms of support in some other school districts.

One of the major problems mentioned by the participants in this study was the availability of sufficient resources. Shortages of teaching resources appeared to be crucial for some of the teachers. As beginning teachers, the participants in this study relied on the school administrator to secure initial resources and materials. The Computer Applications I and II teacher, the Science teacher and the Social Studies teacher all mentioned their frustration at the lack of available resources. In addition, two of the beginning teachers mentioned that they felt the adjacent school could have done more to support them as a school. The adjoining school uses some of the classrooms in the building and consequently the teachers from the adjacent school use resources such as

photocopiers that belong to the Independent School. This created feelings of frustration for some of the teachers at the Independent School.

Resources and materials are also an essential support component for the beginning teacher. As the school was new there were no resources at all for the beginning teachers when they arrived. The principal had to order furniture, had to produce a staff handbook, order textbooks, instructional resources, supplies, and a computer laboratory with all its contents, as the lab, which was already in place, was a vocational one. The interviews with the participants indicated that all of the teachers had to secure resources and materials at the beginning of the school year and for some of the participants this practice continued throughout the academic year.

Ms. Bray explained, “As a CTE teacher the problem I encountered when I came in is just not having access to the things that I needed...different pieces of the material, resources, equipment and things like that.” It was during the second semester before Ms. Bray received many of the resources she needed:

This is second semester, and I have just received quite a few of the resources that I needed and we are already halfway into the term...I didn't have any of these last semester. I just received the things that I really needed yesterday and a few pieces a couple of weeks ago.

Ms. Sparsit also mentioned that “Because I am the science teacher I did want more of the equipment...more resources.” At the time that this study was conducted a new biology laboratory was under construction which is due to open in the fall of 2007.

Ms. Crupp explained that as far as materials, “One of the downs of working in this school is not having access to the materials a copier machine that can do

transparencies or a laminating machine.” She stressed that “I felt like someone could have donated a laminating machine.” She also suggested that the lack of resources had impacted her teaching experience. “I kind of feel cheated with my teaching experience. I have had to scrounge around and work with what I have when I see next door they pretty much have everything.” Ms. Crupp expressed her frustration with the lack of support she perceived she received from the adjacent school. “It’s like, can I use this? Can I borrow this? It’s like “I’m sort of kind is scared you might break this.” But many of us had to go out of our own pockets to get a lot of things for this school.”

Despite the frustration over the lack of available resources and collegiality shown by the teachers from the adjacent high school there emerged a distinct sense of collegiality among the beginning teachers at the Independent School

Collegial Support

Ms. Allen reported that she felt well supported by her teaching colleagues. “I like, at least here, I like the way we feel together as teachers we’re like a whole family you know we all stick up for each other.” She explained how this family atmosphere enhanced the level of collegial support at the Independent School:

Also other teachers that you work with, and I don't know how this works in other schools. I know that not too many other schools have a faculty of eight or nine, without them this would be a lot harder. It's nice to know somebody who knows exactly what is going on.

All of the beginning lateral entry teachers mentioned the support they received from the special education teacher both in the inclusion classroom setting and in terms of being notified of the accommodations and modifications for the students. Ms. Allen

reported that she had eight special education students and received support two or three times a week. She had one ESL student and again the special education teacher supported her. Ms. Sparsit also stated that “The EC teacher comes in one of my classes about twice a week. She has given me all of the information on each students’ accommodations and modifications.”

Ms. Bray indicated that her 4th Block class was a major concern for her. She also had eight special education students and three ESL students. In addition to the support from the special education teacher she also mentioned that she sometimes received support from other students in the class. “Sometimes other students help. I use that as a means to see if they’ve learned what I have taught them.”

Ms. Copperfield also reported that her colleagues are extremely helpful and found that:

It’s comforting to have support from your co-workers. If they can’t actively help they commiserate, that means we are all suffering. I found that we all look out for each other, just try and find ways to support each other, helping each other maybe sometimes talking to a student about giving a teacher a hard time. Of course we have to cover each other's classes a lot when one of us is absent.

She mentioned that both collegial support and hobbies helped her when she felt overloaded as a novice teacher. “I have hobbies. I dig in the dirt, I walk. Digging in the dirt can work out a lot of stuff if you have a big enough yard. I also just talk to some of the other people around here.”

Ms. Sparsit responded in a similar manner as she indicated how she feels supported by other teaching colleagues at the Independent School:

We all share with each other on a daily basis even though we have different subjects and courses that we're teaching. We are all having the same kind of frustrations and good positive things. We vent, I talk to the other teachers, sometimes I just go home and do nothing, try not to think about school and the stresses that I have had in the day.

Like many of the other participants in this case study, Ms. Sparsit relished the collegial collaboration she found among the teachers at the Independent School.

Ms. Trent found that collaboration among the faculty at the Independent School had emerged from the fact that all except one of the teachers were lateral entry.

I think in a way it helps that we are all lateral entry teachers because we are all experiencing the same thing at the same time. Knowing that they are just like me helps me feel better. The way I teach, I am not the only one that's like that, every first year teacher in a similar situation I am in so it does help. The secretary has helped a lot, I know the principal has a lot of stuff on her mind so unless it is necessary I will go and ask her, but after the secretary, and the EC teacher we share a lot.

Phil Parkes also explained that as all except one of the teachers is lateral entry, there was a feeling of collegiality among the faculty. "We are kind of in the same boat so at least we had people to shake our heads at and say "how are you feeling?" He emphasized the need for collaboration across the faculty:

Meeting with the other teachers as far as just chit chat at the faculty meetings. When we have the workdays, or the times before classes, we can find out about them you know "how are you doing?" We are working on some projects that are going to be joint projects, learning how to communicate too. Sometimes we get aligned so we all have an interpretation or standpoint. There is strength in numbers and it also gives us an opportunity to communicate and learn from others.

Mr. Parkes explained that “I know we are supposed to have peer evaluations, but we really don't have the time to do it.” He suggested that as a beginning teacher he would find this process invaluable and informative:

Maybe that is what we could do, other people not just my subject. I try to watch some of the other teachers, who might have doors open, but I think I might make them nervous. While you can't learn it all just by watching someone you can learn things, I sometimes go around the room am I making people dizzy? Am I doing things that are driving folk's nuts? Am I standing in their bubble while I'm watching them work? Little things that I don't have the answer for, just some casual observation you can document. It is a reminder talking about subject matter and how you come across and the quirky little things that drives people nuts. I think it would be important to me [if] one of the teachers during their planning period just come over for 15 minutes, tell me what you think, am I talking in monotone?

Of all the teachers in this case study, Phil Parkes particularly emphasized the wish to engage in peer observations. Again, an indicator of his proactive tendencies for professional development and varied teaching experiences and feedback.

The extent of collegial collaboration that appears to have emerged at the Independent School is interesting. This is likely due to the day-to-day experiences of the beginning teachers and the somewhat isolated nature of the school. Conceivably it may be interpreted as an almost forced element of collegial collaboration.

Parental Support

Ms. Bray described the community in which she is teaching but when I asked her whether parents are supportive she explained:

To be honest for the most part I would have to say no. There are a few parents I deal with consistently that I can call to make sure that their student is going to be on task. Many parents feel like they can't handle their students at home. The

students get to 17 or 18 and the parents just seem to think that they have done all that they can. The parents are younger too and so a lot of discipline is left up to the teachers. For parents that do support me, I appreciate them.

Ms. Copperfield agreed with Ms. Bray and explained that the support from parents is “overall when you add all of the support together it is very low. I would say that’s normal for this location. I don’t know exactly why.” She highlighted the lack of parental involvement at the Independent School. “We don’t have a lot of parents visit school especially when you want volunteers. But I’m finding the parents here can’t support themselves emotionally so they’re not going to support the school. They only come in when their child is in trouble.” Ms. Copperfield also stated that she would like to see more outside support next year:

It’s too much to ask for the induction coach to come next year. I guess we can ask but we know it’s not going to happen. I would like to see more support from the parents, community, and church. More support from people outside of the school who have to live with these kids. If they’re not here they’re going to have to be out on the streets with these people.

Ms. Bray, Ms. Copperfield and Ms. Trent found that the parents at the Independent School were not supportive. Ms. Trent stated “Not at this school. Some does but we rarely see them come in.” She also agreed with Ms. Copperfield and mentioned that “The only time they come in is for an administrative conference but that don’t help much.”

Phil Parkes reported that he found the biggest problem was trying to get in touch with parents or guardians. Ms. Trent and Ms. Copperfield talked about the lack of support they received from parents. Ms. Copperfields’ perception of parental support was overall

very low. She said that not many parents visited the school especially when volunteers were needed. But she also found that the parents in the school community were unable to support themselves emotionally so conceded that based on this fact it was unlikely that they were going to support the school. She also mentioned that parents only came to school when their child was in trouble. Ms. Trent also appeared to have difficulty getting support from parents and found that parents rarely came to school unless it was for administrative conference, which she believed, did not help much. Ms. Bray indicated that the parental support she received varied. She stated that there were a few parents that she dealt with consistently and she knew they would support her. But she also mentioned that many parents admit to not being able to handle their students at home. She said that once the students get to 17 or 18 the parents just seem to think that they have done all that they can do. She also explained that the parents are younger and therefore a lot of discipline is left up to the teachers. All of the participants recognized the need for parental support. In the interviews the teachers told of a wide variety of support they received from parents.

District Level Support Received and Desired by Beginning Teachers

Ms. Bray believed that the support she had received from the school district had helped her as a beginning teacher but suggested that the support was somewhat sporadic:

I feel that I am receiving district support in part, not full support and I say that because I believe that as a beginning teacher there should be support in place at various levels. For example, as a Business Education teacher what I am receiving now in terms of support, is support from my principal, support from my mentor, and support from within the school. I do have very little support outside of the school in the area of CTE. I think for me, and I think the school now as been as this was the first year, we should have a different level of support based on the

needs of the school and the needs of the beginning teachers. I think needs vary depending on school and the area and the types of student you're engaging with. I just think maybe a team that deals with the subject areas that we deal with here and also the type of students we deal with here and then a lot of other things that come along with a new school. s of the school and the needs of the beginning teachers. I think needs vary depending on school and the area and the types of student you're engaging with. I just think maybe a team that deals with the subject areas that we deal with here and also the type of students we deal with here and then a lot of other things that come along with a new school.

Ms. Trent also described the district level support that had been available to her as a novice teacher:

The induction coach has helped me; she has given me anything that I have needed, if I have a question she helped me a lot. If I have a question and she don't have the answer she will find somebody and then give me that answer and knowing that I can depend on that and I don't have to run and find the answer everywhere.

As Ms. Allen reflected on the support that she had received from the school district she stated that, "I think the district does a good job letting the teachers know what's going on especially with the whole lateral entry thing about making sure that they keep up with what is required of them." She alluded to the various requirements that lateral entry teachers need in terms of their teaching license and the fact that the school district has a specialist that frequently contacts beginning teachers to notify and remind them of these requirements:

I like the fact that there is a staffing specialist out there who is constantly reminding me that I need to do certain things. If it had not been like that...I never feel like I'm twisting in the wind. I always feel like they are going to make sure that I get what I need to get and then it's on my head like I lost my own job.

Mr. Parkes responded in a similar manner as he identified specific people who have supported him from within the school district:

They [the school district] have kept us in the loop through information; we do have contacts as far as induction and new teachers. I have had contact with the CTE people, John Westlock and people in his office as far as requirements and things coming from staffing, Julia Mills, requesting information for equipment keeping me current on testing issues and VOCATS. I don't know what kind of readings there might be later this year and next year, but I guess it might be doing a lot of the induction stuff again. First half of the year was so full of meetings I could probably ask one or two intelligent questions now. I don't think I was really able to ask any then because of all the information. There are definitely people there and they do get back to you in some way shape or form. I've been real happy with that, anybody I've talked to have told me to refer to them on a first name basis, I definitely think they are there. My only thing is I hope down the road, we can still meet with these folks as we do gain some experience and we can talk about things.

Ms. Allen explained how she perceives that the school district has supported her as a beginning teacher through the new teacher seminars with the induction coordinator and the induction coach and from one-on-one meetings with the induction coach:

I definitely think the seminars that we do once a month where we may need to either come up with a new idea of how to get something done in the classroom or like when the induction coach and I discuss stuff about how you know...I had this one student who I may need to help and she left. The learning styles seminar that we did makes you think about how you are teaching them [the students].

Ms. Copperfield also stated "The Beginning Teacher seminars have been helpful to me. You get information, you get to talk about situations." Mr. Parkes also responded in a similar manner as he reported that the beginning teacher induction seminars had given the new teachers at the Independent School an opportunity to share useful ideas and teaching strategies:

We have had open forums, topics for discussion with everybody in attendance. It has been good. We have discussed things such as different learning styles, professional dress code and the induction coach gave us a book on classroom management called “Setting Limits in the Classroom.”

Ms. Bray also indicated that she found the monthly new teacher meetings held at the school helpful. “They have served multiple purposes. We have been able to vent and it has been almost like another form of mentoring.”

Ms. Allen described how the workshops and professional development provided by the school district have been helpful to her as a beginning teacher. “The biggest thing is when you hear from other people, being in with a group of people that have tried things is very helpful.” She found that “it was like getting ready to study for a test. Now I can look back and figure it out.” Ms. Bray responded in a similar manner as she explained that she had been able to apply what she learned at workshops and professional development and that it had proved helpful to her as a novice lateral entry teacher.

Classroom Management, Reading in the content area have been very helpful. I have used various examples in the classroom. I had access to different graphic organizers, different situations and how other teachers deal with things. It has helped me apply different techniques in my classroom.

Mr. Parkes agreed that he had been able to apply what he had learned at workshops and professional development in his classroom:

I have applied some of the techniques. As far as graphic organizers, a year ago I knew what they were but I didn’t know how to use them. Now I find I am going back to a lot of stuff. I can apply it to students learning. At first it seemed like we had a puzzle in front of us but we didn’t know how to make it fit. One of the classes that I am taking now on diversity has helped. The central theme of that class is that, “All kids are not the same.”

Ms. Copperfield also found that she had been able to incorporate specific professional development strategies in the classroom:

DEC paperwork...some strategies...SRA, a corrective reading course reading program, no because you need time, funding and support from the administration. Homebound, CECAS, which is Info handler they are two databases that hold information on EC students. I went to workshops so I could learn how to navigate them correctly. I also went to the homebound hospital training that allows me to serve the homebound students. Workshops and professional development are helpful because I have used strategies and information and it has helped me to become more proficient.

When I asked Ms. Allen what types of additional support she desired from the school district as a novice teacher she replied:

The only other support I think that I would love for them [the school district] to do would be to get a handful of classes. Every semester put them online somewhere. If it was online during the year I could do that. I'm supposed to take two, but I'm trying to figure something out and I have to double check about those two that I'm going to take in the summer. They are both online but I have to check whether they will both count [towards her teaching license] one definitely will but I can't seem to find an English anywhere that's online, and that's kind of bugging me to actually need to be there, but this one you don't need to be there but they don't offer it in the summer I am working on that but that would be nice. I know they have the State teach and stuff like that but I don't need it that's the thing if I'm going to go to school and take all of these classes then it's going to be for my masters.

Ms. Bray also reflected on the types of district level support that she desired as a beginning teacher and mentioned that she felt it would benefit her needs if subject specific people met to offer suggestion and share ideas:

I feel like if individuals within the CTE area would come together, I would prefer the county at some point whether it is once every quarter or once every two months to come together just, to have a meeting and discuss issues especially for

new teachers, talk with other people “hey this is what I did during my first year,” come together as a whole. I think that would be very helpful, very beneficial.

Ms. Bray’s request does not seem unreasonable and it is helpful that she recognized the types of support that she believes a novice teacher needs during their first year of teaching. As she faces the next academic school year, Ms. Bray mentioned specific support that she desires:

More support from outside of the school. The induction coach has come in but I don’t suppose she will be here next year. I actually don’t know how we would have got through some things and found out about a lot of things without her. The most support we get is really from each other. The school district CTE person has been in, but I would have liked to have seen her more.

Ms. Crupp also stated that she would like:

More administrative support and from central office. There was such a mix up as to what we could use. Can we use the adjacent schools resources? It bothered me that I had to wait to find out. I needed a laminating machine and an Ellison Dye Cutter.

Ms. Trent also reported that she would like more administrative support and additional parental involvement next year. “I want more help from the administration. This year unless there has been a staff meeting we don’t talk. I want more parents involved and anyway that the district will help.” Phil Parkes responded in a similar manner as he specified the support that he desires from the school administrator:

I need the professional feedback, and more than just the perfunctory observations. I would like some informal discussion with the principal, a little more than just “how is it going?” that type of thing. I like the autonomy, but every once in a while, particularly with being away from the main building, I feel like the parking

lot might as well be the Atlantic Ocean because things happen there and I only hear about them later. Definitely anything that is constructive, just some conversation, official techniques, “have you used this, what’s working?” would be good.

Mr. Parkes also mentioned that he is currently receiving district level support as a CTE teacher and hopes that this will be sustained during the next academic year:

I would almost like to see...I know we have our in-house support, the principal. Bigger schools have assistant principals. Being CTE lateral entry, I wouldn't mind seeing during a free period, someone from the county, someone from CTE. I do remember when we first started I remember seeing Betty Higden one time at the beginning of the year, wouldn't mind seeing her again as at the time that I met her I didn't have my requirements from the state that I needed to take. I only got that in November, so when Betty and I talked about classes we just talked about generalities. We didn't have specifics in front of us it would be good to have a half-day meeting at the county, there are only three of us in the county teaching Culinary Arts. Chances are, we could all ask questions. I don't even know exactly what VOCATS stands for. I can probably find out, but I know it is a great big county but that face-to-face, that one-on-one goes a long way, doesn't have to be every other week but once a term.

Mr. Parkes indicated that next year he wants to particularly work with other teachers. “I would like more support from other teachers with getting into cross-curriculum teaching strategies. I want the continued support from the county and my mentor.” Although he acknowledged that there are so few Culinary Arts people in the county, he mentioned that “short of the e-mails that we send back and forth I would love to be able to catch up with these people just to one on one now and again.”

All seven participants interviewed for this case study reported perceived needs in terms of administrative support. When asked about support from the administrator, these teachers' revealed the extent of the administrative support they desired and received to

varying degrees. Ms. Allen said she needed the support of her principal. “I think they need to know that there's probably going to be mistakes made. You know you need to be able to go to them.” Ms. Copperfield explained “The school administration’s not helpful really. I don’t see her that much. She’s too busy. It’s just easier for me to find somebody else because she’s always got something else to do.” Mr. Parkes reported that, “My principal always takes time to answer questions.” Ms. Crupp talked about the fact that the principal was overloaded with numerous other things. Ms. Bray stated that the administrator was accessible when she needed her “for the most part.” Ms. Trent said that she wanted more help from the administration as she found that unless there was a staff meeting her principal did not talk to her.

The participants in this study have provided evidence to suggest that they recognize that as beginning teachers they need the support of the school administrator as they have offered examples of administrative support to varying degrees. However, it is important that the school administrator continually supports the novice teachers’.

All of the teachers cited instances where they had received support from the school district during their first year of teaching. Phil Parkes had discussed the level of school district support he had received with family members and so had drawn a comparison with other school districts. He had some conversations with his daughter's who taught in different districts in the state, and had drawn the conclusion that he received more one-on-one contact from his school district. He also referred to being “kept in the loop.” through contacts such as, the district induction office. Mr. Parkes mentioned that the CTE people had offered him support as far as requirements and he talked about

also receiving support from the staffing office. Another school district employee had dealt with his requests for equipment and had kept him informed about testing issues and VOCATS. He indicated his level of satisfaction with district level support. “There are definitely people there and they do get back to you in some way shape or form. I've been real happy with that.”

All of the beginning teachers agreed that they had received support in terms of teacher assessment and the observation process from a variety of people. Ms. Crupp reported that she had received support. “The induction coach, the Curriculum Facilitator from another local high school have been very effective as to what needs to be done.” She stressed the point that “I need more people...the Curriculum Facilitator called me out on a lot of mistakes.” She also indicated how this has helped her develop as a beginning teacher. “Between the two of them I have changed a lot of things.” Ms. Crupp offered examples of the advice that she had been given in terms of classroom management and curriculum and instruction, and how indeed she had changed some of her approaches based on this advice and support. “They [the Curriculum Facilitator and the Induction Coach] were both telling me the same things such as I needed to decorate my room. The last time he came he was impressed since before. I had a word wall, EQ’s.”

Ms. Copperfield stated that she had received district level support from the people in the induction office when she was “wanting to leave.” She also sought support from the school district EC supervisors when she had questions about her license. Ms. Sparsit said that the school district had sent people to help her “since we are a new school.” The Curriculum Facilitator from another school in the district had helped her to secure

resources and equipment for her class. Therefore she found that people had been relatively helpful. Ms. Bray explained “I feel that I am receiving district support in part, not full support and I say that because I believe, that as a beginning teacher there should be support in place at various levels.”

Ms. Allen said that the school district did a good job keeping the teachers informed. “Especially with the whole lateral entry thing about making sure that they keep up with what is required of them.” She agreed with Mr. Parkes as she referred to the school district staffing specialist who she found constantly reminded her of the licensure requirements. She said, “I never feel like I'm twisting in the wind.” Ms. Allen also stated that she always felt that the school district would make sure that she received the advice and support that she needed. She explained that “I do feel like the district's watching out for us in a way.” Ms. Crupp explained that she received support from the school district in terms of the professional development sessions that they offered. She mentioned that Reading in the content area was one of the best workshops that she was attending where she had received detailed information. She also stated that she had benefited from the subject specific workshops for Social Studies and that the school district Social Studies coach had been a great help to her as far as getting the materials for her subject area.

Ms. Sparsit and Ms. Crupp talked about the local college partnerships with the school district, which helped lateral entry teachers’ gain their teacher certification, describing the BAL program in a very positive light. They believed that one of the school district’s strong points was ensuring that teachers receive their certification. Ms. Trent was the only teacher to report that: “I don't get in contact a lot with the school district.”

The novice teachers found support from the school district, the principal, the induction coach, the induction coordinator, and informational support in the form of policies and procedures.

Each of the participants demonstrated an ability to persevere, solve and seek out help and advice. Even so, the teachers indicated that there remained specific areas where they desired support as a beginning teacher. Three of the participants mentioned that they desired more subject specific support. Ms. Bray and Mr. Parkes suggested that they would like support from within the CTE area specifically indicating that they would find this type of support very helpful and beneficial. Ms. Sparsit also explained that she would like to have “more support with a specific area throughout the year.” Mr. Parkes also reported that he needs the professional feedback, “more than just the perfunctory observations. I would like some informal discussion with the principal, a little more than just “how is it going?” that type of thing.” Next year not only would he like more support from the administration, but also more support from other teachers with getting into cross-curriculum teaching strategies. In addition he wants the continued support from the county and his mentor. Similarly Ms. Trent mentioned that she would like more help from the administration explaining that this year unless there has been a staff meeting her principal did not talk to her. She also said she wanted more parental involvement and any help possible from the school district.

Because of the unique situation at the Independent School and the fact that the mentoring situation had proved difficult for many of the participants the school district had assigned an induction coach to regularly meet with the teachers. Ms. Copperfield and

Ms. Bray noted that they would like the continued support from the induction coach and from outside of the school. Ms. Copperfield realized however that this was not a typical situation and stated “It’s too much to ask for the induction coach to come next year. I guess we can ask but we know it’s not going to happen.” Ms. Bray found that next year she desired “More support from outside of the school. The induction coach has come in but I don’t suppose she will be here next year. I actually don’t know how we would have got through some things and found out about a lot of things without her.” Ms. Copperfield also indicated that she desired more support from outside of the school, citing the examples of parents, community, and the church. Ms. Crupp explained that next year she would like more administrative and central office support. She also indicated that she wanted to know whether she could use the resources from the adjacent high school. She said that this year it bothered her that she had to wait to find out whether she had access to specific resources. Ms. Allen mentioned that she would like a manual of some sort where she could check what the rules are.

It is worth noting that some of the teachers in this study did mention isolation, which is discussed in the literature as a major concern for beginning teachers. In particular Phil Parkes experienced feelings of isolation as he moved to another building in November. Ms. Crupp identified feeling isolated as one of the major stressors of her job. It is also possible to interpret her frustration over the availability of resources from the adjacent school in terms of being isolated from necessary materials and resources.

When all of the areas where the teachers perceive they need support are compared, some interesting findings emerge. Support from people working within the

school was ranked very highly, whereas support from people from outside of the school was perceived as being less helpful. Therefore it would appear that the participants in this study were mostly seeking support from within their school yet they desired sustained support from outside of the school.

All of the teachers in this group had received support from a variety of sources. However they indicated that there were things that would have made their job easier. In terms of instruction, Ms. Trent believed that her job would be easier if everything was planned out and she just had to come in and teach. Ms. Copperfield had found inconsistencies in the discipline policy across the school and Ms. Crupp indicated that she would like the administrator to support her more and advise her of the disciplinary consequences that were given to students.

All of the beginning teachers also reported additional support with the monthly beginning teacher seminars with the induction coach and the induction coordinator. Attendance at these seminars is mandatory and is part of the required professional development for beginning teachers within the school district. For each of these meetings a topic was established prior to the meeting that would enable the teachers to participate and share experiences. These meetings addressed questions and concerns that the participants had in addition to presenting information on a variety of topics such as classroom management, curriculum and instruction, and differentiated learning styles. Before each meeting the teachers were also asked if they had any topics which they would like to be discussed at these seminars. According to the teachers these meetings

were helpful as they gave the teachers opportunities for reflection and a time for sharing ideas and various strategies. Phil Parkes explained:

We have had open forums, topics for discussion with everybody in attendance. It has been good. We have discussed things such as different learning styles, professional dress code and the induction coach gave us a book on classroom management called “Setting Limits in the Classroom.”

Ms. Bray said that for her the seminars had, “served multiple purposes. We have been able to vent and it has been almost like another form of mentoring.” Ms. Sparsit reported that:

Some have been helpful. We get to vent and that helps. The discussions also help. The different learning styles seminar that the induction coach did was one of the most helpful. Sometimes there are things we have heard before, but it often helps to hear it again.

Ms. Copperfield pointed out that “The seminars have been helpful to me. You get information, you get to talk about situations, its’ comforting to have support from your co-workers.”

Teachers need opportunities to increase their skills and knowledge in the form of professional development. Interview data suggested that beginning teachers perceive that professional development is a huge part of the support system in this school district. All beginning teachers must earn at least two credits per year which show professional growth during their first three years as a new teacher. There are numerous seminars and workshops that provide opportunities for novice teachers to earn these credits. Most teachers’ end up with many more additional credits than the required two credits per

annum. Topics for these workshops have included such areas as Reading in the Content Area, Classroom Management, Curriculum and Instruction, Teaching diverse students, and many more which follow up on some of the orientation sessions. Experienced people such as school psychologists and curriculum facilitators from within the school district present these sessions in a variety of forms. During these sessions teachers are encouraged to participate and share ideas and classroom experiences.

The beginning lateral entry teachers indicated that they needed help fulfilling their licensure requirements. Responses concerning coursework and college credits suggested that the teachers desire support and collaboration on the part of the school district in an attempt to ensure that there are appropriate college courses available. Additionally, the lateral entry participants in this study stressed that they found it challenging to be taking college credits towards their teaching license during the same semester that they are teaching. Lateral entry teachers must earn a minimum of six college credits each academic year until they have fulfilled all state licensure requirements.

Lateral entry teachers are expected to teach as soon as they accept a position that is without a degree in education and the training that their traditionally prepared counterparts have received. It is also well known that this results in novice teachers having to fulfill licensure requirements while employed as teachers. However, it is important that the participants in this study recognized the need for support from the school district in an attempt to meet the district and state requirements at the same time that they are fulfilling their teaching expectations. As one of the lateral entry teachers had participated in the BAL program during the summer of 2006 she was able to complete a

great majority of the credits required prior to beginning her teaching career. In addition the Beginning teacher II who was a traditionally prepared teacher did not express any concern in this area.

Interview data, observations, and field-notes indicated another form of support that beginning teachers perceived that they need for professional growth is evaluation. The school district provide a clear outline of the evaluation procedure in *the Beginning Teacher Support Program Orientation Packet*. Classroom observations with prompt follow up feedback helps novice teachers develop and grow.

As previously noted, the support offered to beginning teachers in this school district extends beyond the first year of teaching. The *Beginning Teacher Support Program Orientation Packet* provides evidence of continuous professional growth over a period of three years. Interview data provides evidence of the types of support that beginning teachers would like to receive as they progress into their second and third years of teaching.

Summary

This chapter presented the data analysis and findings of the study that relate to the expectations and realities of teaching, orientation, mentoring, resources, collegial support, parental support, and district level support received and desired by the beginning teachers as a thorough discussion of the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers and their perceptions of the support they receive. Chapter VI will present the data analysis and findings of the case study that relate to the unique situation at the

Independent School, the development of beginning teachers, and the decision to remain in the teaching profession.

CHAPTER VI

UNIQUE SITUATION AT THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

The previous chapter presented the data analysis and findings of the study that relate to the expectations and realities of teaching, orientation, mentoring, resources, collegial support, parental support, and district level support received and desired by the beginning teachers at the Independent School. These findings were presented as a thorough discussion of the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers and their perceptions of the support they receive. This chapter will present the data analysis and findings of the case study that relate to the unique situation at the Independent School, the development of beginning teachers, and the decision to remain in the teaching profession.

Ms. Allen alluded to the unique situation of the Independent School. “Well I think we are in a situation that's quite different.” She inferred that as a lateral entry teacher knowledge of the bureaucracies could be problematic. “I don't know what the politics are like of the school system or anything like that.” She referred again to the unique situation of the Independent School and how quickly the school was opened. “But again, it's a special circumstance. I mean with the school getting approved when it did it's not like anybody had any time to get ready.” Ms. Allen suggested that this is the only issue whereby she felt that she could have received more support. “Other than that I feel like I've been instructed and backed up with everything that I have done and if I have made a mistake I've been told it's okay or what I should be doing, so I feel pretty good about that.” Ms. Allen referred to the unique situation of the Independent School and how she

perceives the levels of support that she has received as a beginning teacher although as she explained she had nothing to compare it to:

I know I've never taught anywhere before but I did feel backed up here. I do feel that there's support, I do feel that even though this school got together quickly I still feel like the principal's watching out for us, watching out for each other. I do feel like the district's watching out for us in a way.

Ms. Allen's teaching assignment was particularly challenging for a beginning lateral entry teacher. She stated that this was "because of the type of kids we have, because it's a brand new teachers, brand new school, brand new everything." Ms. Bray also found her teaching assignment challenging due to "the diversity of the classroom in terms of culture, ethnicity, and gender." She mentioned that:

I have to deal with so much diversity and so many different learners. It is difficult finding strategies to make sure that all of my students are successful. Also having to satisfy different people such as the administration, the county and parents and at the same time complying with everything.

Ms. Copperfield responded in a similar manner and stated, "It is a new school, new teachers, new everything. The children are high level at risk among other things. It's just a really, really difficult situation." Ms. Crupp also found challenges with her teaching assignment:

Oh yes, it's challenging for everybody. I feel like we were all placed in a difficult situation. 80% of the students had behavior or attendance issues. The school, relationships, resources had not been established. We were given a misconception about the program.

Mr. Parkes responded in a similar manner:

Yes. Part of it is trying to get students to see the worth of some of the subject areas such as Math and Science. It's more than just cooking. There are also opportunities for advancement in the field.

Ms. Sparsit also believes that her teaching assignment is challenging.

"The students, it's hard to get their attention but also they just don't like science." Ms.

Trent also found her job to be challenging:

Yes. Because aside from planning there are papers to grade, and aside from papers to grade there are parents to contact. Students don't show up for weeks and then show up and expect a good grade. I make myself available. I tutor before and after school.

Ms. Allen described the school and her classes stating that there were

"approximately 100 kids. My classes are fairly big (20-25) and that's in relation to Social Studies and Science which have 10-12 students. The demographics are 99% African American students." Ms. Bray also stated:

The Independent School is small. We have small classes which is a very good thing. The diversity of its teachers and the programs we offer are good. I feel that the school can be very successful as students grow, learn and get used to the teachers'. I would like to see more diversity, a good blend of students. The students are smart. I believe they deal with a lot of barriers and issues that hinders them in being successful.

Ms. Copperfield stated that she taught seventeen Special Education students and one ESL student. She described her involvement in serving special education students:

It's been difficult because these children do not open up to strangers. Now they are beginning to open up to me. Also I am not the main teacher. Being EC some of them don't know who I am. Some of them now though ask me for help even if

they are not EC. I guess it's hard because they don't come to me, I just kinda float around.

Ms. Crupp liked the fact that it is a small school. "I like seeing the students progress. With only 15 in a class we can see the students being successful." Ms. Crupp has three special education students and reported that, "I work with the EC teacher. I am able to use graphic organizers for a lot of them. Many of them have IEP's that are similar. It's nothing for me, or the EC teacher to print off additional materials." She also has three ESL students and reported that, "the EC teacher gives me extra resources. I have lists of the modifications and accommodations that each student needs. A lot of the kids are beginning to ask the EC teacher for help." Phil Parkes also stated that:

The school is small in size. It is designed to give students a head start in a career direction as opposed to some of the traditional high school's. It is small enough that we can get to know our students well. My classes started out quite large and those classes would have been too large for a kitchen experience. Now my classes are down to 12/14 students' which is a good number. I have seven EC students. A lot of the modifications and accommodations for my students are things like extended time for testing or exams. So I try to accommodate that on my own. I don't really have any situations where I need the extra help. Officially I have no ESL students. I feel there is another one but she is past the time period that the state classes them as ESL. I had to clarify this with the EC teacher. So I use the one of the other students to help clarify if she is not clear of it in English.

Ms. Trent also found the size of the school and her classes to be an advantage. "Small school, very small classes, which is helpful."

When I asked Ms. Allen how she handled behavior issues and discipline she stated, "I try to talk to the kids first and quietly take them into the hallway. If that doesn't

work then I take them to the office. This semester we have had very few discipline issues.” Ms. Bray also explained how she handled behavior issues and discipline:

I am very tolerant of a lot of things. I have to be patient being a teacher. There are times I have to discipline. The way I find things work for me is to talk quietly to the student, sometimes just a look or a touch on the shoulder will work. If the behavior continues I take the student out of the classroom. If this doesn't work I call the parent and have the parent talk to the student. If the student has done something really unacceptable I will write them up and send them to the principal and she will dish out discipline or suspend or whatever she sees as appropriate.

Ms. Sparsit responded in a similar manner. “I ask them to stop. I am getting to the point where I have to call the parents because it's continuous with quite a few of them.”

Phil Parkes stated that handling behavior issues and discipline depended on the circumstances. “I try to treat all students with respect and dignity. I pick my battles and try to handle situations low-key one-on-one. I try not to get sucked into an argument.”

Ms. Trent found that she had difficulty with disciplining the students:

Maybe it's me I'm so lenient. They just don't listen to me because maybe from the start I was not hard on them. Even though I look like I'm strict, I'm not. I think that is one of my weaknesses. They can see when I'm mad and have my face on.

Ms. Trent connected some of her classroom management and discipline problems to the students' behavior and lack of responsibility. “I don't get the respect from students, I think that's what makes it more difficult and the students even their responsibility, it shook me that a lot of these kids are not responsible. She compared teaching to babysitting:

It's like you are babysitting a five-year-old, they are not even teenagers, they're just kids little babies. They are around 14 to 17 ninth to 12th grade. You can see in them who is responsible and who is not the more you know them.

Ms. Trent found that the students were having an effect on her physically:

So they just make me more tired because I feel like I am babysitting. If it's just one or two it's nothing but if it's three fourths of the class so it's a lot more difficult and I don't have time to just stay on their back this is what you have to do all the time.

She is frustrated with the lack of attention the students displayed in her class. “The bad thing is when they don't listen and when they don't pay attention when they complain Math is boring but I hate it when they don't listen and they don't do their work. I know they can and they won't.”

Ms. Crupp stressed how overwhelming the situation became for many of the faculty in view of the lack of knowledge, expectations, and experience on the part of the staff and in terms of expectations of the students at the Independent School:

I feel like a lot of people didn't know what to expect with this school with it being the Independent School. I think there were some misconceptions as far as the type of students we would be dealing with and when we got into it was almost overwhelming. I think even for the principal it was quite overwhelming as far as the type of students that were here at the school altogether on the second floor all day long. I just think it was an experiment for the most part first semester, that's why it was so awkward we didn't know what to expect and when it happened it just blew us over.

Ms. Crupp reported that there was a need for support among the teachers in terms of discipline within the school. “A lot of us felt like something needed to be done as far as disciplining kids. They could get away with anything. We also needed suggestions on

how to deter student conflicts.” She stated that she had implemented some of the strategies that had been suggested at workshops and professional development such as picking and choosing battles. “I had a rough time disciplining the kids. I really learned how to talk to people.” She inferred that little thought had gone into the initial planning of the Independent School and that the lack of skills, knowledge and experiences of the teachers and the administrator was indicative of the problems and issues that the faculty were to face during the first semester. It soon became evident that the students that had been recruited into the Independent School needed structure, a discipline plan and a clear support network in place. Ms. Crupp implied that the lack of experience among the faculty had presented numerous problems and suggested that there had been no cohesive structure across the school in terms of a discipline plan. She also suggested that the lack of consistency in terms of rules and procedures within the school had lead to difficulties for the teachers within their classrooms:

I think if all of us, even administratively, if we were all consistent like we said from day one. But we didn't know I mean not any of us had been in a classroom like that or been a teacher. As far as with tardies and attendance that could have been something that we could have worked on collectively. As far as classroom management here at this school I just feel like pretty much we could have our own different things going on in each classroom for the most part. But for this semester we have said now that we hold our rules to each of our classes. I'm not letting them have cellphones I'm not letting them have an MP3 player and that's something that's been working. It is a cut down but it's not a zero tolerance and that's something that I want to happen at this school.

Phil Parkes also mentioned how the behavior of some of the students and the nature of the Independent School presented difficulties when the school initially opened:

I think that we had some issues in the beginning as far as discipline, as far as adherence to the rules by the students. I don't think students quite understood what the Independent School was about, what we were trying to do. To a large degree we would hear from people unofficially. Which we had to sometimes had to work through, that the Independent School was kind of a dumping ground the students who were not cutting it at the adjacent high school. So we did have our problems. I think we went about a week and a half before we had our first fight, which I guess in the whole scheme of things, it was pretty good.

Mr. Parkes suggested that he would have liked more support from the administrator in terms of information and communication about discipline issues.

But then I think some of the ways with the discipline...we didn't always understand what was going on. It wasn't communicated back to us other than "so-and-so is out on suspension" but we didn't quite get the whole picture from the administration, then again it was no small undertaking by the administrator either. But then again, you would scratch your head sometimes with some of the issues, and you wouldn't hear anything back. There was just a lot of stuff, and maybe it worked on a needs to know basis, but again not knowing the whole disciplinary process and I know there are legal issues and so on, and maybe just having one person is a lot better than a group. I don't know all the ins and outs.

Ms. Trent also explained some of the difficulties she had encountered as a first year lateral entry teacher at the Independent School.

Teaching is well [pause] maybe it's true or not true because it's here. I guess this is like a different school. At first I thought that I would give up because the type of kids, because I am not this type of person and I haven't grown up in this environment, so when seeing it more you know so much in one place. I just feel like it's kinda not for me.

When I asked Ms. Allen "How do you respond to critical incidents at the school?" she stated:

When something bad happens I stay in the classroom and call 911. I yell and try to get them to stop. After every incident I discussed it with the students. We talked about things such as riots, and egging people on. I got handouts such as how to deal with it without violence.

Ms. Bray explained how she responded to critical incidents at the school. “I try to be proactive and hear or feel an incident and try to address it before it happens. I am not the type of person to just stand back.” Ms. Copperfield said:

When they start fighting I close my door. I don't allow them to leave their desks. The students are not allowed to go out. I have been close to one or two of them [fights] and I have helped bring one or two into my class and closed the door. One student who had been fighting was being taken to jail I walked over to the police car and gave him my telephone number in case he didn't want to call his parents as some of them don't. If you can't get to the kids before the fight breaks out it's hard it's critical to break it up before it starts. Once it starts about the best you can do is get your behind out the way because they'll get you too. It's like they turn into something else. Boosters stand around and film the fight on their cell phones and block you from breaking it up.

Ms. Crupp also stated “I stay in the room. If I can stop it before it escalates I will. I call downstairs to the office.” Ms. Sparsit also reported, “I call the administration. I have been lucky as most of the fights and things have not happened in my class.” Ms. Trent also responded in a similar manner. “I try to break them up. I call the principal, I block the door to stop students going out if it is happening out there. I have to keep the students in class.”

Mr. Parkes explained how he had responded to a particular critical incident at the school. “One time I tried to break it [a fight] up and got hit in the head by a student. At the time of an incident though I look at everyone's safety as a priority.” He found that he needed support to respond successfully to these critical incidents at the Independent

School. “I need direct access to the administration. One thing is that I feel isolated sometimes. If it is going on outside and the phone is busy, what am I supposed to do if I’m by myself?” As Mr. Parkes is located in a different building from the rest of the faculty and the school administrator he is concerned about the effects of being isolated. “With being away from the main building, I feel like the parking lot might as well be the Atlantic Ocean.”

Ms. Allen indicated that in order for her to respond successfully to incidents such as these she felt that she needed some support:

We need a School Resource Officer. We definitely could use that particularly with the ratio of male to female teachers. We need faster action to be taken. Often we have had to wait for the police from the adjacent high school and they are normally over there, but by the time they get over here the fight is normally over so they just end up taking statements.

Sally Sparsit also stressed that the gender make up of the faculty meant that support is necessary for her to respond successfully to these critical incidents as “we have a group of women. We need some kind of help.” Madeline Bray also stated that she needed support when dealing with critical incidents at the school. “I need support from my peers, from the administration. I do the best that I can to protect the safety of students and faculty. We need a SRO.” Ms. Copperfield also identified the need for a SRO:

We need a resource officer. We need In School Suspension and some kind of place to isolate kids before it gets started. We have a room but there’s no supervision so they just kind of run up and down the hallways. The secretary calls 911 and the principal from the adjacent high school. 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 of the AP’s and the SRO from the adjacent high school come over to help. We have to get help from some place else and keep them calm. Sometimes they are worse after the fact than they were before or during.

It has been seen that all of the participants in this case study recognized that they were in a unique, and at times critical situation at the Independent School. They realized the challenges that they faced and each of the teachers were abundantly aware of the support they needed in order for them to respond successfully to critical incidents at the school. What has also been seen is how dealing with these incidents led to the development of these novice teachers.

Development of Beginning Teachers

Ms. Bray described the areas of concern that she still has as a beginning teacher and how she envisioned her experience will help her develop as a teacher in the future. She also indicated how these responsibilities and concerns had affected her perceptions of the day-to-day challenges of teaching and the emotions that she has experienced.

Testing is an area of concern for me because you are responsible for your kids and if they pass or if they fail. You know the whole class is struggling to do well in testing and so the burden of that on your shoulders is quite much, and so it's kind of stressful in those areas. But the other end of that is that I know this is my first year and I still have a lot to learn. I feel that as time goes on and I experience and as I learn from other teachers, mentors and other people that I will be able to better serve my students. So it has been a mixture of some days you feel like you want to cry other days you are just happy because the students have learned something. They'll surprise you and say "Ms Bray..." they'll come up with something and you say "you were really listening to me and you really did learn it," and then you get very annoyed if you didn't accomplish something.

Ms. Allen explained that she has developed as a teacher as a result of the support and experience that she has received. She expressed that:

I feel like I am more capable in the classroom, more confident because of getting better at the lesson plans. Being able to ask people about the problem students.

Getting to know the students and them knowing me helps me feel more comfortable with them.

Ms. Bray also found that she had developed as a teacher this year. “I have definitely grown and developed this year because of the support that I have received from the induction coach and other support professional’s.” Ms. Copperfield responded in a similar manner:

I am more patient and more confident with the things I am doing as I find I get a positive response from the students and teachers. I just had to understand that they were raised differently. I can’t expect the same from them as I can kids raised in other places, I wish I could but I can’t.

Ms. Crupp found that her confidence in her abilities as a teacher had grown over time and believed that this helped her in planning lessons. “This semester as far as right now I feel more confident. I know what to teach the kids I feel like I am more proactive in giving them the correct notes and information and also planning visual aids.” Ms. Sparsit also believed that she has developed as a teacher as a result of support and experience. “I have developed a lot. I started with nothing. Now I can do a lesson plan and teach and get through it. I can deal with discipline at the same time.” As she summarized her first year as a lateral entry teacher she stated, “It was challenging but we have made progress as a staff and with the students. We have had academic as well as personal successes with the students.”

Ms. Trent described how she believes she has developed as a teacher as a result of support and experience. “I have become a better teacher. Knowing everybody here is lateral entry helps. I know I have grown a lot.”

As Ms. Copperfield envisioned next year she stated that she intends to focus on “more collaborative teaching, teaching a whole class as well as serving EC students. I want to do SRA the corrective reading program but we are going to have freshmen so that may be hard.”

To sum up her first year, Ms. Allen had very positive feelings about her experiences and the challenges that she had faced. She reported that overall she found her first year to be “exciting, nerve-racking, fulfilling. It’s been a good year and it kept continually getting better.” As Copperfield summarized the academic year she laughed as she reflected on her previous anxieties and how she has put in place her “coping strategies.”

Overall it’s been a good experience. It went from being bad. The kids were so vulgar, out of control and I didn’t want to be here. I used to drive around the block once, as I didn’t want to come in. I used to think about it and I always figured I needed a job and had to go. But some of them are still horrible but they don’t disturb me as much as they used to. Once I didn’t have to cover classes anymore it got better.

Ms. Bray summarized her first year as a lateral entry teacher at the Independent School:

It’s been a great challenge, but yet a greater learning experience. I have come to build relationships with the students, co-workers, administrators, and I can truly say that it’s been a good year in spite of the challenges. I do feel like, with the group of teachers, and staff that we have here, I believe that is the reason why many of these kids have been successful to this point.

As Phil Parkes reflected on his first year as a lateral entry teacher he gleaned a mental picture of the phases of a first year teacher. He stated:

It looks like the phases of teacher development that the induction coach and I discussed earlier in the year. At the beginning I was nervous. I was wondering if I was completely nuts. Then I started to feel comfortable as the saying goes, "You have to crawl before you can walk" and so on. Then my comfort turned to excitement. "I'm feeling good about this." I started to get some ideas such as, "Next time, I'll do it differently." Then I found myself going through the whole evaluation scenario and started to think that it's only 20 something days to go and it's been good. I now feel that I want to get it done and start thinking ahead to next year. I want to be able to hit the ground running this coming year.

Nelly Trent reported that she thought her first year had been "great. It's over. I think after we come back after Memorial Day that will be the hardest. There are times I like it and times I don't like it. Overall I'm glad to be here." She believed that her own culture may have presented some difficulties for her. "First of all I'm not native and so that is already a difficulty in addition to every other stuff." However she found that as time went by the situation at the Independent School had improved for her. "But the more I taught, I think I like it better now than the first day. I wish it could be better and I'm hoping for it to be better but I've liked it more, a lot more." She expressed that she now felt more optimistic than when she first started teaching at the Independent School. "It's tiring but I think I like it a lot more than the first day because I remember that and the second day I probably started on a Monday, Tuesday morning I already go to the principal's office." As she reflected on the challenges that she had initially faced and her original perceptions of teaching she said:

It don't matter what school you are in just don't give when you first start out because it does get better. In time you will learn to like it better, just like me because those first couple of days was crazy but now when I look back those days are gone the year is almost over and I'm still here. I am amazed and I am proud of myself.

Ms. Crupp also perceived her first year teaching experience as a time of growth:

It's been a growing experience. There was no set foundation. The teachers and students have set the standards here. I know all the students and teachers went through a struggle. We were isolated with no resources. I love my job. We all grew as a family. The students and I are working together. I'm working for them and they're working for me. It motivates me to do better for the kids. I can't say "it's the worst year of my life" – I can say "it's the most growth I've ever experienced."

Ms. Crupp mentioned how she believes that a traditional teacher program could have made a difference to her classroom experience:

I think if I was not lateral entry, I feel like it would have gave me an edge. I think I still wouldn't have felt the same way because I see a lot of people that have an education background as far as their undergraduate degree and they feel the same way I do. I mean if anything they have more classroom hour's experience than me that's the one thing I feel like that has the edge. But as far as how we feel and what we go through it is all the same thing.

She still has anxieties in terms of the resources that are available to her as a beginning teacher. However she does recognize that she has developed considerably over this school year. She explained:

I feel like I know what I'm talking about now. I am more confident. I know I still have room to grow but my perspective on teaching has changed. The students will take notes and there is little or no disruption to their learning. I thought it was going to be like when I was in school, but I know now that student's remember more from active learning.

What is evident in this powerful testimony is that Ms. Crupp remained optimistic despite of the challenges that she has faced as a first year beginning lateral entry teacher. She concedes that her current teaching position has presented many unexpected

difficulties but she maintained that the support that she had received had helped her to be successful this year.

All of these participants demonstrated their ability to reflect upon their experiences. In addition the teachers recognized that they had developed as a result of support and experience. Phil Parkes relished his autonomy in the classroom, "I've been given opportunities to run my own show." He mentioned that he had sought out support when necessary and was visibly more confident. "My confidence has developed. I was nervous at the beginning...I think now I am more relaxed. I can think on my feet and my students are making progress."

Ms. Trent believed she had become a better teacher finding collegial support from her lateral entry colleagues. "Knowing everybody here is lateral entry helps." Many of her teaching colleagues have openly discussed the change that they have seen in Ms. Trent. They have alluded to her tenacity, her emerging sense of happiness in her work and her growth as a teacher, which they have witnessed. She also recognized this aspect in herself. "I know I have grown a lot."

Ms. Copperfield noted that she is more patient and more confident with the things she is doing. She evaluates this in terms of the positive responses she has received from the students and teachers. She has also come to understand the students more, is no longer wanting to transfer schools and is visibly much happier in her work. She no longer drives around the block before she comes into school and laughingly explained that "I didn't want to come in." Ms. Sparsit found that she had developed a lot after starting with nothing. Now she can write a lesson plan, teach and deal with discipline at the same time.

Ms. Bray reported that she had definitely grown and developed this year because of the support that she had received from the induction coach and other support professional's.

Ms. Allen stated that she felt more capable in the classroom, more confident because of the improvement she had made to her lesson plans. She found that being able to ask people about the challenging students and becoming better acquainted with the students and them knowing her had helped her feel more comfortable with the students. Ms. Crupp now believed that she knew what she was talking about and she feels more confident even though she acknowledges that she still has room to grow as a teacher.

Decision to Remain in the Teaching Profession

As Ms. Allen summarized the extent of the support that she perceived she received from the school district during her first year of teaching she inferred how indeed this affected her decision to remain teaching for this particular school district. "If I'd felt like they did not care that much it probably would have changed my mind about teaching in this county." Ms. Crupp also suggested that the support that she has received from the school district will have some effect on her decision to remain teaching within this particular county as she perceives that the school district is very supportive of novice teachers as a method of retaining them:

There are some people in the county that have expressed to me that beginning teachers in the county are very important because there is a shortage of teachers in The state and their main focus is to keep us here. I feel like people have that goal in mind and that's one thing that's keeping me here in this county because I see that people want to help change things and help us out.

Ms. Bray indicated that the district level support that she has received will not be a deciding factor on whether she decides to remain in the teaching profession. She did however emphasize how the political arena and its effects on students may well be a deciding influence on her decision to remain in teaching in the future:

I do not think the district support that I get will affect my decision to remain in the profession. The biggest factor that will decide if I remain in the profession is if I am accomplishing the things that I should be accomplishing as a teacher and if the political arena is not getting to be that if you have so many politics it's impossible to teach the children that would have an impact on my decision whether to remain a teacher. I think if it comes to a point where... I know the needs of my students because I'm here with them daily. I know their different needs, their different learning strategies and teaching strategies for my kids and [if] it comes to a point where were told to teach a certain way that the overall... to whether the kids are learning is testing per se I think that would pretty much discourage me from continuing to teach because as I said earlier there are certain beliefs that I have as far as the way kids learn and the effects on their needs. I see everyday in my classroom how kids are learning and sometimes they surprise me. When I don't think they're listening they are. But sometimes testing does not show that and if the powers that be or the board or whatever decided okay these kids need to pass these tests in order to move on to determine if they're learning or that you're not teaching them then I would have to rethink my career as a teacher.

Ms. Copperfield stated that the district level support she has received this year will not affect her decision to stay in teaching. "No, I just want to teach. After going through this past year it would have to get mighty horrible for me not to want to teach anywhere." Ms. Trent also responded in a similar manner:

I just feel that I like it more I don't think the district support will affect my decision to continue or not, not right now or stop if I teach it don't matter what it is I still will teach and if I don't like it, it don't matter how it is.

Ms. Sparsit suggested that like Ms. Copperfield, Ms. Bray, and Ms. Trent the support that she had received would not affect her decision to remain in the profession:

I do want to stay in the profession I can't say that the district support has been the most helpful. It has been there but is not going to affect my decision to stay or to leave. I think this is going to be it I do think this is what I want to do. I think more support with how to teach science would have been helpful. The general helping with new first-year teachers that's helpful but for me I needed "how do I teach my subject?" More resources and help with how to do labs would have been helpful how do I get the students interested in doing labs and things like that.

Mr. Parkes stated that he can be resourceful enough and explained that the levels of support that he has received would not be a determining factor in whether he decides to remain in the teaching profession. He also recognized that he has the necessary skills and knowledge to seek out help when necessary:

I can go out and work with the system and get the information, it will not be a deal breaker as far as me staying here. I think in my case as long as they want me, because I like what I am doing, I think that is going to be up to me. If I need some information I will figure out with the help of the administrator or somebody how to get what I'm looking for, that will not be a deal breaker.

Based on the evidence provided by the participants, teaching at the Independent School is challenging. In my view this would be a challenging situation for any new teacher learning the NCSCOS and becoming accustomed to the school community.

All of the participants recognized that they had a challenging teaching assignment. In the interviews, the participants told of a wide variety of strategies, which they used in an attempt to cope with the critical incidents that occurred at the Independent School. There were a number of responses, which indicated that the beginning teachers

were proactive in trying to deal with incidents when they occurred. Phil Parkes had been injured trying to break up a fight. Ms. Bray said that she tried to be proactive and hear or feel an incident and tried to address it before it happened. She also indicated that she was not the type of person to just stand back. Ms. Allen indicated how once the situation has been resolved she uses the situation as a teachable moment. Ms. Sparsit said that she calls the administration. She also believed that she had been lucky as most of the fights and things had not happened in her class. Ms. Trent and Ms. Copperfield used similar strategies for coping with critical incidents at the school. Ms. Trent stated that she tried to break the students up. She called the principal and blocked the door to stop students going out if the incident was happening in the hallway. Ms. Copperfield reported that when the students started fighting she closed her door. "I don't allow them to leave their desks. The students are not allowed to go out. I have been close to one or two of them and I have helped bring one or two into my class and closed the door." Ms. Crupp explained that she stayed in her classroom and similar to Ms. Bray tried to prevent an incident before it escalated if possible. She also called the office for assistance.

The fact that all of the beginning teachers at the Independent School perceived that their teaching assignment was challenging suggested that discipline is a fundamental issue for the participants. The support provided by the school administrator in terms of school wide discipline was perceived in a variety of ways.

All of the participants mentioned that they needed help and support from the administrator and other sources in order to respond successfully to critical incidents at the school. Phil Parkes said he needed direct access to the administration. Ms. Bray and Ms.

Allen mentioned that a School Resource Officer was needed. Ms. Bray stated that she needed support from her peers, and from the administration to enable her to protect the students and faculty. Ms. Sparsit indicated that more support was needed based on the gender make up of the faculty. “We have a group of women. We need some kind of help.” Ms. Allen also suggested that with the ratio of male to female teachers faster action was needed. She reported that the teachers at the Independent School often had to wait for the police from the adjacent high school, but by the time the police arrived the fight was normally over so they just ended up taking statements.

Responses such as these indicate that the beginning teachers at the Independent School have faced major critical incidents. It has been seen that the participants in this study bring a wide range of life and career experiences to the teaching profession and many of the teachers are also parents and are thus used to dealing with children. Even so, the responses suggest that they have had to deal with situations that they were not trained or indeed prepared for. However at the time that the interviews were conducted for this study all of the teachers mentioned that the critical incidents had lessened and that they were satisfied with their teaching assignment at the Independent School. Neither of the teachers were contemplating leaving either the school, the district, the county or the profession.

While the participants were very positive about their expectations of teaching, they were less enthusiastic about discipline and their challenging teaching assignments. The positive results are even more noteworthy given the critical incidents that the teachers have had to deal with at the school.

To respond to critical incidents and to be accountable for student success, beginning teachers are expected to achieve a certain level of competency early in their teaching career particularly in terms of classroom management, and curriculum and instruction. All of the participants in this study recognized that they faced challenges in terms of classroom management and discipline. Several of the teachers mentioned that they would have preferred to spend more time being instructed in classroom management issues at orientation at the beginning of the school year. The participants' thoughtful comments demonstrate their range of experiences, the critical incidents they faced and their determination as teachers. In addition they worked through instructional problems typical of beginning teachers using a variety of approaches. These included asking for suggestions from their teaching colleagues, requesting help from the administrator, their mentors, the induction coach and the induction coordinator.

Phil Parkes explained that he believed many of the initial discipline issues within the school had emerged from the students perceptions of why the Independent School had been established. "I think that we had some issues in the beginning as far as discipline, as far as adherence to the rules by the students. I don't think students quite understood what the Independent School was about, what we were trying to do." He also mentioned that the perception of the school community and the philosophy behind the Independent School did not help the teachers and administrator in terms of trying to establish an orderly effective school setting. "To a large degree we would hear from people unofficially...that the Independent School was kind of a dumping ground for the students who were not cutting it at the adjacent high school." According to Phil Parkes this

presented the faculty with some major issues. “We did have our problems, I think we went about a week and a half before we had our first fight.” However, he believed that if the teachers had received more information from the school administrator, then many of the issues might have been overcome. “I think some of the ways with the discipline we didn't always understand what was going on. It wasn't communicated back to us...we didn't quite get the whole picture from the administration...you wouldn't hear anything back.”

Mr. Parkes suggested that not being informed of the disciplinary process at the Independent School was not helpful to him as a beginning teacher. He also mentioned that some of the terminology used by the administrator was unknown to him. He referred to the daily notes that all teachers received via email from the administrator. “Graphic organizers, keep them on task, keep them engaged,” when it was all we could do to keep them in class.” Mr. Parkes suggested that the students’ schedules did not help as the teachers had, “No idea where anybody was supposed to be, schedules was so screwed up it wasn't even funny. We had people going in and out of the first month, and didn't know which class they were supposed to be in.”

It is well known that beginning teachers need their planning time protected as much as possible. It is also well known that in many schools the administrator attempts to increase novice teachers planning time. However as the Independent School did not have a Plato teacher until November 2006 all of the teachers had to give up at least half of their planning period to cover the Plato class and none of the teachers received increased planning time. The Computer Applications teacher received no planning time at all until

November. As Ms. Bray is a computer teacher and Plato is a subject that is taught via the computer the administrator made the assumption that she could teach Plato during her planning time.

However, as the Independent School is a small school with a small faculty class coverage was not always possible. Ms. Copperfield indicated that there were some workshops that she would have liked to attend but as there would have been no one to cover classes in her absence the administrator denied her request.

Variations in teaching assignments can make the initial years of teaching considerably less challenging. It is recommended that beginning teachers receive less demanding classes during their first year. However in reality what typically occurs is that new teachers are assigned the most challenging students, with multiple classes to prepare lessons for. Findings show that all of the students at the Independent School are what the teachers deem challenging. Therefore, the issue of teaching students with fewer difficulties did not arise during this study.

The interview data indicated that beginning teachers are encouraged to participate in professional development. The superintendent had mandated that all new teachers must take curriculum and instruction and classroom management as professional development during the first quarter of the academic year. These sessions were held at a school the other side of the school district and began at 4:00pm. As the Independent School schedule does not end until 4:30pm this presented some difficulties for the participants.

It has been shown that there is a wide range of teaching experiences among the participants in this study. The teachers have shared their stories of challenges, frustration,

anxiety and also success stories. Therefore, it is important that school district administrators and site-based administrators realize these frustrations, understand the limitations of novice teachers, and provide a continual structured system of support for beginning teachers.

I witnessed fundamental changes in the demeanor, approach, teaching strategies, classroom management, confidence, growth, and enthusiasm due in a large part to the support the teachers received. The close correlation between resources, relationships, and personal factors led to a more inward-looking family atmosphere-its achievements and aspirations encapsulated in collaboration. It will be argued, and with some confidence, that the participants in this study have gone through fundamental changes in their professional lives, and that these changes have led eventually to the emergence of what, many of the teachers deem to be a “family” atmosphere at the Independent School. As the Independent School family has grown more educationally prosperous, and more inward looking, there has emerged the “family” that is so sympathetically described by Madeline Bray. “They are like my children, and also it’s kind of natural to just you know, if you are a parent, if you are a mother, and you know certain students that you are worried about, you carry that with you.”

For many of the new teachers the first semester was particularly challenging and the benefits of their determination and hard work have emerged slowly and with an air of uncertainty. However, it is clear that as the year progressed, so there emerged a substantial majority of students who, by discipline or negotiation, managed to enjoy a significantly improved standard of education. It is equally clear that the great majority of

students, who attend the Independent School, have learned to trust and build relationships with the faculty. In addition the teachers have learned the strategies that best work with some of the students that they teach, and more importantly still, the value placed on relationships.

All of the participants in this study remained positive about their chosen careers despite significant challenges. Ms. Sparsit said that she wanted to stay in the profession but indicated that the district level support that she had received would not be a deciding factor for her. “I can't say that the district support has been the most helpful. It has been there but is not going to affect my decision to stay or to leave.” Ms. Trent stated, “I don't think the district support will affect my decision to continue or not, not right now or stop. If I teach it don't matter what it is I still will teach and if I don't like it, it don't matter how it is.” Similarly Ms. Copperfield mentioned that the district level support she had received would not affect her decision to remain in the profession. “No, I just want to teach. After going through this past year it would have to get mighty horrible for me not to want to teach anywhere.”

Ms. Bray also explained that it would not be the district support that she received that would affect her decision to remain in the profession. She found that the biggest factor that will decide if she remains in the profession was, “If I am accomplishing the things that I should be accomplishing as a teacher.” She also mentioned that the political arena could potentially be a deciding factor for her. “If you have so many politics it's impossible to teach the children that would have an impact on my decision whether to remain a teacher.”

Phil Parkes recognized he can be resourceful, work with the system and get the information, and suggested that the support that he has received will not be a “deal breaker” as far as him staying at the Independent School. He explained that as long as the school district wanted him he was happy to remain with the district. “If I need some information I will figure out with the help of the administrator or somebody how to get what I'm looking for, that will not be a deal breaker.”

The participants I interviewed were seven beginning teachers, six of whom were lateral entry teachers from a high school in the southeast. The Independent School opened in August 2006 serving students' 10-12th grade. The administration was new and the school had 90% minority students and an 85-90% free and reduced lunch rate.

After examining the responses given by the participants, several common themes emerged of beginning teacher perceptions of the mentoring and induction process. However the specific responses varied as the teachers described the highs and lows of their teaching experiences. Responses given by some of the teachers suggested that, there have been times when they have been dissatisfied with the beginning teacher support they have received from various sources. Nevertheless, the majority of the responses indicated that overall the teachers have found a level of satisfaction with the mentoring and induction process. Teachers generally felt well supported and optimistic in their challenging teaching assignments. The more mature teachers may be better skilled at asking for help when they need it.

Because of the small number of male participants in this sample, it would be interesting to explore these possible gender differences more fully. This group is more

satisfied with the collegial in school support received as beginning teachers than the support received from the school district. These results support the research that states the first year of teaching is very challenging for beginning teachers.

Improvements to a mentoring and induction program for beginning teachers are crucial to the sustained development of new teachers. The school district in this study sent out a survey to teachers, administrators, mentors and induction coordinators requesting feedback on the mentoring and induction process for novice teachers during April of 2007. At an induction coordinator meeting in May it was suggested by the school district that the results from the surveys are used to make informed improvements to the mentoring and induction program. At the time that this case study took place a representative from the school district attended a training session in California on the mentoring process for beginning teachers. In the summer of 2007 a team from California will be conducting workshops and extensive training with the school district in an attempt to make improvements to the current induction program for beginning teachers. In addition the school district also collaborates with the local university and has set up a new program with a grant from a local bank to improve the mentoring and induction program. These continued efforts for improvement suggest that the school district is keen to implement new strategies and methods to improve and sustain the support, which they offer to beginning teachers.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers. This Chapter presented the findings and data of

the case study that included analysis of interviews, observations and field-notes of six lateral entry Beginning Teacher Is and one Beginning Teacher II. The Independent School was a new 10-12th grade high school, the administration was new, and all except one teacher was new to the school district. These findings were used to assess the perceptions of beginning teachers of the mentoring and induction process. The data also indicates the types of support that beginning teachers both received and desire. When coding and analyzing the participant responses to the interview questions several distinctive perceived needs emerged. The beginning teachers indicated that they desired support from the school district, the school administrator, the community, parents, and mentors. More specifically the participants stated that they needed support in the areas of classroom management, discipline, curriculum and instruction and in the securing of resources.

There is a good deal of evidence to support the view that the beginning teachers have received an extensive amount of support. It does appear that the combination of improving available resources and declining discipline issues tended to foster an increasing support network. Although it is impossible to measure precisely the correlation between resources on the one hand and district support on the other, it is perfectly clear that improvements in the former exercised a profound, and beneficial, effect upon the latter.

The collegial relationships that have formed between the teachers have increased supportiveness, patience, risk-taking, participation, and a sense of inclusiveness. The teachers' personal growth was evident through increased trust, initiative, risk-taking, self-

confidence, a more positive self-concept and emotional and social development. Their professional growth was demonstrated in an improved understanding of the importance and utility of establishing a community within the school, the advantages of working collaboratively with colleagues, and the importance of being flexible. All seven teachers said they were happy at the school although they had found the beginning of the academic year extremely stressful.

After my observations and interviews, the new question formulating in my mind was, “How to increase the support provided for beginning teachers?” As Sagor (2000, p. 138) advocates “now is the time to consider your original theory and the way you understood it and contrast it with the story that actually emerged from the data.” Information from the semi-structured interviews provided contextual and anecdotal evidence that gave life to the data. The results of this research has had some impact on the way in which the teachers perceive the support they receive and it’s impact on their practices and dispositions, and more generally on the school atmosphere. As the interviews were conducted, the teachers suggested new teaching strategies and immersed themselves in the power of reflection and truly began to formulate ideas about what they could do to utilize the district support more effectively. Sometimes when things start out small the reputation becomes known and inspires others to take on similar activities. If other teachers, administrators, and central office personnel are made aware of the positive benefits that improvements in the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers is having on one group of teachers, then these strategies may well become the school district norm given time.

This chapter presented the data analysis and findings of the case study that relate to the unique situation at the Independent School, the development of beginning teachers, and the decision to remain in the teaching profession. Data analysis and findings were used to inform the summary, conclusions and recommendations to improve the mentoring and induction process for beginning teachers that ensures that educators understand how to recognize an effective program of support and describe its essential variables. These recommendations and implications will be discussed in Chapter VII.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the previous chapter, the analysis and findings of the study were presented as a thorough discussion of the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers and their perceptions of the support they receive. The central purpose of this case study was to determine the beginning teacher perceptions of the mentoring and induction program within their school district. More specifically, the study focused on the following four research questions.

1. What kinds of adequate support do beginning teachers say that they need in the induction and mentoring process? How do new teachers perceive the support that they actually receive?
2. How do beginning teachers develop as teachers as a result of support and experience?
3. How do new teachers respond to critical incidents and what support is necessary for them to respond successfully?
4. How does the support beginning teachers receive and the extent to which they develop influence their decision to stay in the teaching profession?

Chapter VII offers concluding remarks in relation to this case study and suggestions and recommendations for improved practice and future research.

School districts must recognize that it is important to continually review beginning teacher induction programs if we are to support, sustain and retain novice

teachers. In addition teachers must be provided with professional development opportunities that increase teacher quality and student learning.

This case study used participant interviews to gain a greater understanding of beginning teachers' perceptions of the induction and mentoring process. Supplementary information was acquired through observations and field notes. School district handbooks, notebooks and supporting documents that addressed areas such as the induction process, the role of the mentor, district procedures and professional development opportunities were also analyzed. By evaluating the support structure provided to beginning teachers, a framework for improvements in the mentoring and induction process may be offered to school districts in an attempt to increase and enhance existing programs.

The state has a lateral entry teacher program that offers opportunities for non-traditionally trained people to enter the teaching profession. Typically the lateral entry program provides those that choose to make a career change with a chance to work towards their teaching license at the same time as teaching in the classroom. Six of the seven beginning teachers in this case study were lateral entry teachers who expressed an interest in making a career change for a variety of reasons. Family members or former teachers motivated some, some wanted to "give back" and others found that they wanted to work with young people.

The lateral entry teachers in this case study found a system of support in ensuring that they met the licensure requirements from the Department of Public Instruction and

their local school district. In addition local college partnerships with the school district also provided a support network for lateral entry teachers.

Summary of Findings

The results of this case study demonstrate that the beginning teachers are provided with a mentoring and induction program. This summary examines the beginning teachers' perceptions of the support that they are offered by the school district.

Induction Programs

Induction programs that support beginning teachers enable teachers to develop and grow as a result of the support they receive. The school district offered support that reflected an intention of development and growth for novice teachers. Beginning teacher monthly meetings that focused on specific content and offered an opportunity for beginning teachers to dialogue and share ideas and proven strategies were provided by the school district. These meetings also addressed topics such as classroom management, curriculum and instruction, and differentiated learning styles. In addition to the monthly beginning teacher seminars beginning teachers received assistance from their teaching colleagues.

District Support

The induction coach and induction coordinator at the monthly beginning teacher seminars encouraged collegial collaboration. These meetings are mandated by the school district. Interview data suggested that most beginning teachers found these meetings helpful to them in their practice. These collaborative experiences provide opportunities for sharing ideas and strategies, problem solving, and encourage effective decision-

making. The varied backgrounds and experiences that the beginning teachers had also added to the growth and development of these novice teachers.

Bartell (2005) suggests that the most successful induction and mentoring programs will address all of these possible differences and needs of beginning teachers in order to ensure success with their students.

An effective plan for support of all these new teachers will recognize and build on the knowledge and experience the beginning teacher brings to the classroom, assist teachers in gaining what is weak or lacking, and extend learning so that the teacher moves to higher levels of accomplished teaching (p. 9).

The participants brought a range of life and career experiences to their classrooms, which evidently served as a rich resource for teaching and learning. The backgrounds from which these beginning teachers emerged provided opportunities for the participants to connect new teaching and learning experiences. Consistent with the literature the school district encouraged beginning teachers at professional development to share strategies, ideas, and frustrations with other beginning teachers. Responses from the beginning teacher interviews indicated that there are numerous people from the school district that are available to offer support, advice and guidance to novice teachers. Some teachers also received support in the form of a mentor.

Mentors

Interview data also indicated that the beginning teachers are provided with mentors. The evidence offered by the participants in this study suggested that the mentoring situation was not typical of other schools in the school district. As the school was new and many of the assigned mentoring relationships proved unproductive an

induction coach was sent to the Independent School by the school district in order to provide support for the beginning teachers. Interview data showed that while all of the beginning teachers were assigned a mentor there were only two examples out of the seven of effective mentoring provided for the beginning teachers from the adjacent school. Mentor support for the participants in this study included such areas as classroom management, curriculum and instruction, benchmark assessments, reflection, and obtaining resources. Some mentors also helped novice teachers with reflective practice and lesson planning.

The participants in this study indicated that there were scheduling difficulties in meeting with mentors, which hindered the helpfulness of the mentoring support provided. Additionally some of the mentors taught different subjects to the mentees and could therefore provide little help in terms of curriculum content. According to novice teachers, professional development workshops also provided an opportunity for collaboration with other teachers' and para professionals.

Professional Development

The school district mandates that all teachers new to the county must attend classroom management and curriculum and instruction professional development workshops during their first semester of teaching. All of the participants in this study indicated that the school district provided professional development opportunities, but the beginning teachers rating in terms of the value of this support varied. The participants indicated that the timing of the professional development sessions proved difficult due to their teaching schedules. The beginning teachers also reported that some of the issues

discussed at the workshops did not apply to the Independent School setting and students. In addition one teacher explained that although professional development opportunities are provided by the school district attendance it is at the discretion of the school administrator if the workshop takes place during the school day. In addition to providing all beginning teachers with professional development opportunities the school district also mandates that all teachers must attend orientation.

Orientation

According to the interview data all of the participants in this study attended the required 3-day orientation provided by the school district. This orientation is intended to offer teachers new to the school district opportunities to become familiar with district policies and procedures, and become acquainted with their school community and colleagues. Teachers hired after the first day of orientation must attend make up sessions. While the majority of beginning teachers reported that they found orientation helpful, many of them also indicated that they were given a lot of information in a very short amount of time and which left them with a feeling of being unprepared to teach. As this implication was made by lateral entry teachers, the school district might consider providing a lengthier orientation for lateral entry teachers in addition to the ten day requirement by the state.

Summary

While the school district is providing mentoring and induction support for beginning teachers, there are gaps in the program. Data sources revealed that while some beginning teachers are receiving the necessary resources and materials, some areas were

overlooked by the school district's induction program. So although this support is provided to some beginning teachers, there were other novice teachers who did not receive sufficient support in securing resources. Providing beginning teachers with sufficient resources is essential for the novice teacher and can lead to the first year of teaching being less stressful for the beginning teacher. The school district might consider ensuring that new schools have all of the necessary resources and equipment and ensure that lateral entry teachers are informed of their resource entitlement. In addition, for the majority of the first semester neither of the teachers received their full planning time as the beginning teachers had to cover the Plato class. A teacher was not hired for this position until the end of November 2006.

The data indicated that there was some variation in the perceptions of the beginning teachers in terms of the support that they received. Participants cited examples of various levels of support from the school administrator, school district and other sources. The interview data also identified that some of the teachers related to the developmental stages of a beginning teacher indicating that a sustained network of support is critical to the development of novice teachers.

Conclusions

The findings in this study indicate that there is a mentoring and induction support system in place in the school district. Inconsistencies existed in several areas mentioned by the participants in terms of how these systems are implemented at both the district and building level. Novice teachers also indicated these inconsistencies affected the value of the support that beginning teachers received. The mentoring program was highlighted as

a critical feature of the induction process for beginning teachers in this study. In addition leadership and building-level administrative support was also an area where all of the participants indicated that they desired additional support. Insufficient resources proved difficult for some of the participants in this study. Specifically some novice teachers were unaware that they could request particular resources and materials until well into the second semester. Linking beginning teachers with mentors from their own subject content area could ensure that beginning teachers are offered essential advice on the entitlement of resources and also improve the school districts support system.

Variability of Data Findings

Beginning teachers at the Independent School are being supported by the school district; however, there is strong evidence to suggest that this support system varied across subjects. Some teachers reported inconsistencies in the value of the mentoring program, orientation, administrative support at the building level, and professional development. Experiences, personalities and levels of maturity may be a determining factor in terms of these inconsistencies.

The interview data indicated the value of orientation varied in terms of the helpfulness of the resources provided at orientation. As six of the seven beginning teachers in this study were lateral entry teachers, connections in terms of classroom management and curriculum and instruction could not be made without full explanation of the materials given at orientation. As the timing of orientation proved difficult for several of the participants in this study the conclusion may be drawn that beginning lateral entry teachers need a different orientation program to that of their traditionally

trained counterparts. Although the school district offered lateral entry teachers a 10-day program as opposed to a 3-day program for traditionally prepared teachers. The content of the remaining 7 days proved insufficient in terms of the lateral entry teachers feeling prepared to teach a class.

Bartell (2005) stresses the importance of those who plan teacher induction have some understanding of the skills and knowledge that new teachers bring to the profession. She points out that increasingly new teachers are entering the profession through alternative routes to certification yet it is the “early deciders,” that enter through the traditional four or five year college education program. Typically these teachers study the subject content pedagogy of the subject they wish to teach.

Wang & Odell (2002) identified three major areas that are crucial in the teacher mentoring process: (a) humanistic (assisting teachers on a personal level immerse themselves into the teaching profession); (b) apprentice (assisting beginning teachers transition into the culture of the school and help with the progress of teachers in specific contexts); and (c) critical constructivist (reconstructing teaching, asking questions and questioning current teaching practices). In this case study the participants also found variability in the mentoring support system.

The school district provided mentors to all of the beginning teachers in this study; however, the initial mentors that were allocated to many of the novice teachers in this study proved of little value. In fact there were only two mentoring examples of sustained support throughout the school year. The interview data indicated that some mentors met regularly with their mentees, whereas others met rarely or not at all and had established

an email support network. The participants that met regularly with their mentors reported that they received support in the areas of planning, sharing of teaching strategies, assessments and securing resources. One teacher cited an example of her rare meetings with her mentor indicating that support in terms of classroom management was offered but support could not be provided for her subject as her mentor taught a different subject. Given that the adjacent school has a large faculty the question as to why an effective sustained mentoring network could not have been established remains unanswered. A fundamental issue suggested by many of the participants was that the scheduling differences between the Independent School and the adjacent school proved difficult when the beginning teachers attempted to meet with their mentors. As the Independent School is an urban high school the interview data suggested that there were unique challenges to this specific school. Therefore the role of the mentor was even more crucial to the beginning teachers at the Independent School.

According to Tillman (2005) typically urban school teachers' teach children of color, who may not be motivated, resources may not be readily available, there may be lack of parental support, and teacher instruction may not follow the traditional methods. As a consequence mentors of teachers in an urban setting may have a very different role to play when compared to the mentors serving teachers in a primarily middle-class setting.

What Claycomb (2000) suggests is that mentors within the urban context may have to help novice teachers in acknowledging and dealing with the challenges posed by

teaching students from poverty, and who frequently require that their teachers advocate for them socially, academically and emotionally.

Variability also emerged with regard to administrative support at the building level. Although some beginning teachers felt supported by the administrator, data from the interviews revealed that there are some novice teachers that do not feel adequately supported by the school administration. The literature suggests that building level administrators play a crucial role in the development of beginning teachers, which ultimately may lead to a teacher deciding to leave the teaching profession. There are specific circumstances that add to the teacher shortage such as lack of administrative support, classroom management issues, poor working conditions, low pay, the aging teacher population and early retirements (Murphy et al., 2003). School administrators need to be involved in the induction process and in ensuring that effective mentoring is taking place. This finding suggests that structures need to be in place and that the school district might implement some form of accountability in terms of beginning teacher support from the school administration. Hope (1999) points out that regular contact is needed from administrators in order to inform novice teachers of expectations and successfully orient them into the culture of the school. Hope (1999) identifies six elements of professional development that should emerge from contact between the new teacher and the school administration. These are (a) intervention to decrease the isolation of teachers, (b) the facilitation of collaborative relationships and mentoring, (c) accessibility, (d) making professional development available, (e) ensuring that the

teaching assignment is aligned in order to ensure success, and (f) describing the process of evaluation.

It is well known that the entire induction program emerges as a collaborative process. Not only the school district but also the building level administrators are the collaborative links between the beginning teacher and induction. Brock (1999) explains that administrators need to nurture and help their teachers develop and assist with the transition from teacher education programs into the culture of the school. The atmosphere of the school culture is frequently linked to the isolation that is often present in schools. Brock and Grady (2001) assert that when new teachers teach in a school culture where the faculty share common goals and work collaboratively they are more inclined to have a positive teaching experience. On the other hand novice teachers that start their teaching careers in an unstructured environment are more likely to experience a less positive climate and even isolation.

Although there were attempts made by the school district to provide a mentor for each of the novice teachers interview data offered evidence that the quality and value of support provided in terms of the mentoring process was variable. Beginning teachers did receive quality support from the induction coach and induction coordinator at the monthly beginning teacher seminars which one teacher described as similar to another form of mentoring. These meetings focused on topics that are important to novice teachers and also offer opportunities for discussion and problem solving strategies. The interview data also suggested that there was collegial collaboration among the beginning teachers, which they viewed as another form of support.

The intention of the school district induction program is to provide training and resources to ensure that all teachers new to the school district have a smooth transition into their role as a teacher. As Hargreaves and Fullan (1999, p. 18) point out,

After decades of assuming that teachers taught alone, learned to sink or swim by themselves and got better over time only through their own individual trial and error, there is increasing commitment to the idea and the evidence that all teachers are more effective when they can learn from and are supported by a strong community of colleagues.

District support consists of mentors, para-professionals, induction coaches, induction coordinators, and professional development opportunities. It is evident that some professional development workshops provided for the participants in this case study were perceived to be insufficient in terms of offering support specific to the Independent School. Several of the novice teachers stated that the topics discussed at some of the workshops did not apply to the nature of the students at the Independent School.

The school district must ensure that when a new school opens that there are sufficient resources for the teachers. In addition beginning teachers need advice from people that are aware of their entitlement in terms of resources at the beginning of the school year. Interview data indicated that some teachers were not aware that they were entitled to particular resources until well into the second semester. For Fullan (1993), novice teachers enter the profession with commitment, passion and an idealistic view of teaching, determined to make a difference in the lives of their students. Yet, often they face challenging teaching assignments, inadequate working conditions, lack of resources,

and isolation. Shocked by the realities of teaching, they encounter a system that fails to value its teachers as one of its most precious resources.

It is well known that beginning teachers need protected planning time as a form of support. However, as there was no Plato teacher until November 2006 at the Independent School all of the novice teachers had to give up at least half of their planning time each day in order to cover the Plato class. This situation may have been different if the Independent School had been larger and if there had been more veteran teachers to cover the Plato class. As six of the seven teachers at the Independent School were lateral entry teachers that were working towards full licensure as alternatively licensed teachers at the same time as teaching protected planning time is a crucial part of their induction into the teaching profession.

Bartell (2005) asserts that the increasing number of people entering the profession without this basic classroom preparation is somewhat problematic. She identifies that alternative programs vary considerably from state to state ranging between programs that are offered evenings, weekends and throughout the summer to programs where certification can be achieved through assessment of knowledge and skills and demonstrated experience. Typically teachers who opt to take the alternative certification route take coursework classes at the same time that they are serving as teachers. Six of the seven beginning teachers in this study were lateral entry teachers. Many of the teachers indicated that there were added pressures from having to teach and take classes to fulfil their licensure requirements.

Two of the lateral entry teachers described partnerships from the local college and school district as a means of supporting lateral entry teachers to gain licensure. Another indicated that the support she had received from the school district staffing specialist had ensured that she was continually aware of her licensure requirements. This suggests that the school district is making a sustained effort in providing beginning teachers with sufficient information on college courses, professional development opportunities and cultivating relationships with local colleges that provide opportunities for lateral entry teachers to gain full licensure. In addition to securing a well-educated workforce these actions have the potential to retain an increasing amount of quality teachers.

Recommendations

This case study examined the mentoring and induction process at the high school level as it is provided by one school district in the southeast for beginning teachers. Recommendations for the school district central office, the school administration, beginning teachers, para-professionals, and mentors have emerged from the data findings in this study. These recommendations will be discussed and conclusions will be offered with suggestions for further research.

Central Office Recommendations

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2007) school districts must make a valuable investment in the quality of beginning teachers at the outset of their teaching career. This support needs to be sustained throughout the novice teachers' professional career.

Training central office administrators in issues that ensure accountability of

school level administrators in supporting beginning teachers is essential. This would prove to be effective professional development as central office administrators would need to support the building level administrators in relation to the building level administrators supporting beginning teachers. Novice teachers in this study frequently suggested that they desired more support from the school administration. In turn, building level administrators need central office support if they are to effectively support the beginning teachers.

The school district must ensure that beginning teachers are provided with a mentor that teaches the same subject as the novice teacher. Data from the interviews revealed that this was an issue for some of the participants in this case study. In order to facilitate beginning teacher development it is necessary for the school district to provide a mentor that has sufficient subject knowledge, skills and is able to offer timely suggestions in securing resources for the subject that the novice teacher is teaching. In addition central office administrators should ensure that all mentors have been through mentor training prior to being assigned as a mentor to a beginning teacher.

Central office administrators must be acutely aware of the needs of beginning teachers in terms of resources and other instructional materials when a new school is opened. Content specific areas such as Science, Computer Applications, and Social Studies must have access to sufficient resources in a timely fashion. Interview data indicated that some beginning teachers were not aware that they could have specific resources until the second semester. Other teachers were unsure as to which particular resources from the adjacent school they were allowed to use. The science teacher did not

have sufficient resources in the science laboratory when the school opened. A new science laboratory was due to open the next academic year.

Professional development opportunities need to address the specific needs of beginning teachers and students at a particular school. Beginning teachers often commented on the issues that were discussed at some of the professional development workshops did not always apply to the specific situation at the Independent School. The School district should seek to provide site specific professional development opportunities such as sending a team of para professionals to the particular school site that are experienced in meeting the particular needs of a group of beginning teachers.

School Administration Recommendations

Teachers reported various levels of support from the school administrator. It is well known that beginning teachers need the support of site based administrators to ensure effective teacher development. Although it is necessary for all school administrators to support teachers in line with district objectives it was particularly evident at the Independent School as most of the beginning teachers were lateral entry and also because the school and the administration was new. Interview data indicated that some of the beginning teachers perceived that the school administrator was always too busy dealing with other issues. Therefore, the beginning teachers had formed a collegial support network among the faculty. It is evident that collegial collaboration existed at the Independent School, however, as there was only one veteran teacher and six of the seven beginning teachers were lateral entry teachers effective administrative leadership was essential in ensuring that the correct policies and procedures were adhered to.

Beginning Teacher Recommendations

Although novice teachers do not have teaching experience they must be proactive in seeking help and support from their mentors, school administrator, central office and other para professionals. They should seek out professional development opportunities, attend meetings that they have been invited to, follow up on advice and suggestions provided and take some responsibility for their own professional development.

Beginning teachers must also make the time to observe other teachers in the classroom setting. Interview data indicated that some beginning teachers desired peer observations as a form of support. The sharing of ideas and classroom strategies are essential in the development of beginning teachers.

Mentor Recommendations

Veteran teachers who agree to mentor beginning teachers must provide satisfactory mentoring and support to their mentees. Once the commitment to the beginning teacher is made mentors should make the necessary time and be proactive in assisting in the development of the novice teacher.

Veteran teachers should not agree to be mentors until they have completed mentor training. Data indicated that some of the mentors assigned to the beginning teachers in this study had not undertaken mentor training although they intended to at some point during the school year. Feiman-Nemser, Schwill, Carver, & Yusko (1999) note that although mentoring is the most common form of support for beginning teachers for it to be effective requires thoughtful selection, training and support of the mentor.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is recommended that future research on the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers focus on central office and site based support. This recommendation is based on the findings of this case study as the data indicated that some beginning teachers felt more supported than others. The school district should also address the need for the school administration to be accountable in supporting beginning teachers. In addition research on assigning mentors that teach in a different subject area to the mentee might consider just how effective the mentoring process is for the beginning teacher. Data collection techniques that acquire information from mentors, beginning teachers and the school district would add to the current research. In addition, further research about the mentoring and induction process of beginning teachers could offer useful insight for the state department of education, teacher education programs in colleges, universities and to school districts and local school boards.

Limitations of the Case Study

This case study used a qualitative, case study research approach to reflect the beginning teacher perceptions of the mentoring and induction program within their school district. Interviews were used to gather information regarding beginning teacher induction. Each interview served to elicit specific information regarding the participants' perceptions of the mentoring and induction program. As this case study was limited to only one group of teachers from one school in a large urban school district in the southeast, the generalizability of the findings is limited. In addition the design of the

study did not fully explore all additional sources that may have relevant information to the mentoring and induction program offered to beginning teachers.

Summary

It would be absurd to deny that the study of beginning teachers' remains beset by conceptual and empirical difficulties of the most complex kind and as The Independent School was a particularly fertile ground for learning about the experiences of beginning lateral entry teachers given that the school was new and six of the seven beginning teachers were lateral entry. Nonetheless certain generalization does now appear to be possible. It seems clear that throughout the period covered by this case study there existed a profound – albeit complex – support system for beginning teachers provided by the school district. The result was the growth and development of the novice teachers in terms of instructional techniques, collaboration among the faculty, the ability to seek help and an increase in their confidence as beginning teachers. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that as the academic year progressed, the beginning teachers continued to accept the inevitability of the challenging teaching assignments at the Independent School.

There is a real justification for devoting more attention to the day-to-day lives of beginning teachers in the southeast. Yet even here caution is necessary, for it would be easy to be misled into believing that in certain areas at least the experiences of beginning teachers became synonymous with those of teachers as a whole. Nothing, it should now be clear, was further from the truth. It has been seen that at the Independent School

beginning teachers never managed to receive anything approaching a comparable support system as is typical of novice teachers in the school district.

The lack of interest shown by some researchers in the experiences of beginning teachers, mentoring and induction have been both unnecessary and unfortunate. It has been unnecessary because, as must be clear by now, a good deal of reasonably confident generalization can certainly be made. It can be shown that the mentoring situation at the Independent School was not well established, and that proved somewhat difficult for the beginning teachers in this case study. The induction support provided by the school district for beginning teachers is well established, but at times proved somewhat vulnerable with gaps and inconsistencies in this system of support for beginning teachers.

In seeking to reconstruct the day-to-day experiences of beginning teachers at the Independent School during the academic year 2006-2007 it is necessary to look beyond the struggles of the relatively few teachers mentioned here. It is essential to examine too the teaching experiences of the great mass of men and women engaged – whether full-time, part-time or on a substitute casual basis. The perceptions of these teachers was affected by the lack of resources, challenging teaching assignments and the induction and mentoring process provided by the school district and the support they either did or did not receive as a beginning teacher. So although it is possible to point to signs of an increasingly supportive teaching experience, a careful examination of the available evidence shows that the teachers desired continued support from a variety of sources in their teaching positions. Nevertheless, the data also indicates that the beginning teachers

remained remarkable for their ability to persevere without sufficient resources in a challenging situation.

The school district is providing a mentoring and induction program for its beginning teachers. The school district has mandated that all teachers new to the district must attend a 3 day orientation program. In addition to the 3-day program all lateral entry teachers must complete a notebook based on research on topics such as classroom management, curriculum and instruction and other issues deemed useful to the non-traditionally prepared teacher. Other written documentation is provided to all new teachers such as the beginning teacher notebook and documentation on school district policies and procedures. All novice teachers must also attend the beginning teacher seminars held at their schools where topics relevant to the role of a novice teacher are discussed. Additionally the school district has mandated that all new teachers must attend curriculum and instruction and classroom management professional development in their first semester of teaching. In the first three years of teaching in the school district all teachers are provided with a mentor.

However, the evidence that has emerged in this case study indicates that sustained support was not always evident at the Independent School and that there were times when the beginning teachers did not feel well supported by the school district, mentors and the school administrator. Horn, Sterling & Subhan (2002) suggest that an effective induction program is provided through orientation, mentoring, professional development, and collaboration. Both the extent and quality of induction programs vary extensively between school districts and from state to state and while individual school districts may

have particular circumstances and needs, effective induction, support and mentoring programs for beginning teachers need to be a priority. Nevertheless, due to the lack of finances, politics, commitment and other resources some induction programs prove to be ineffective and lacking in specific areas (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

The school district administrators must ensure that beginning teachers feel that they have a sustained network of support. These gaps in beginning teacher support must be addressed if new teachers are going to receive the induction and mentoring programs that are needed for the teachers to feel adequately supported.

This research was important because it provided data on beginning teachers perceptions of the mentoring and induction process. It also contributed data pertinent to lateral entry teachers in the southeast thus offering perspectives on the specific needs of beginning lateral entry teachers new to the school district. In addition the research provided data from novice teachers at a new school with a new school administration.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORMS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: LONG FORM

Project Title: The Effectiveness of the Mentoring and Induction Program for Beginning Teachers

Project Director: Dawn Lambeth

Dear Participant,

My name is Dawn Lambeth, a doctoral student at UNCG in the School of Education. I am also an intern for the Office of Induction and Success within the Independent School System. I am conducting a study to learn about the effectiveness of the Mentoring and Induction Program for Beginning Teachers. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are either an administrator or a teacher at The Independent School.

Your participation in this research study will help me have a better understanding of the Effectiveness of the Mentoring and Induction Program for Beginning Teachers. The research will help school districts and site based administrators decide on the types of professional development that beginning teachers need to be offered and the level of support necessary in order for beginning teachers to be successful. Your experiences will shed light on the critical issues facing beginning teachers. You will benefit from this study because your voice will be filling a void in research that presents the need for the administrators and teachers perspective. Society will benefit because your voice will be contributing to the body of knowledge in education.

All participants will remain anonymous. During the course of the project your responses will be kept strictly confidential and none of the data released in this study will identify you by name. Your name will remain anonymous and you will have the opportunity to select a pseudonym to be used during and after the interview. With your consent I would like to audio tape up to four one hour interviews and take some hand written notes as you speak. There are no risks to you as a participant in this study.

The information gathered during the interview will remain in secured possession in a locked file cabinet in my study at home and will not be shared with anyone other than members of my dissertation committee and the research review committee in the

Independent School System. After three years the written notes will be shredded and the recordings will be erased. If you would like to withdraw from the study, you may do so at any time without any consequences. If you choose to withdraw from the research process, neither your interview nor transcripts will be used in this study. Furthermore, you may discontinue participation in this project at any time or refuse to respond to any questions to which you choose not to answer. You are a voluntary participant and have no liability or responsibility for the implementation, methodology, claims, substance or outcomes resulting from this research project. There will be no adverse consequences to you for not participating in this study.

You are free to ask any questions or express your concerns with me regarding this project at any time. You may contact me by telephone at (336) 508 8904 or email at southeast.com My faculty sponsor is Carl Lashley and his contact number is (336) 334 3745. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research involving people follows federal regulations, has approved this research and this consent form. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project can be answered by calling Mr. Eric Allen at (336) 256 1482. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to you if the information might affect your willingness to continue participation in the project.

Sincerely,
Dawn Lambeth
Doctoral Student
Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations
School of Education
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Participant's Assurances

I have received a copy of the approved Independent School Research Application Form for this research project. I am familiar with the purpose, procedures, intent, scope, and benefits involved in this research. I understand that the Independent School System is not conducting or sponsoring this research project.

_____ **I am willing** to participate in this research project.

_____ **I am not willing** to participate in this research project.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

- ◆ Tell me the story of how you became a teacher
- ◆ Is teaching what you expected it to be?
- ◆ Explain what your teaching experience has been like this year.
- ◆ Name some of your likes and dislikes of the teaching profession.
- ◆ Has your school district assisted you this year? If so in what ways?
- ◆ What types of support do you consider that you need as a beginning teacher?
- ◆ What do you believe district support should look like?
- ◆ Are you receiving what you believe district level support should look like? If so, cite some examples.
- ◆ Will the district level support that you have received affect whether or not you decide to remain in the teaching profession?
- ◆ Do you have any other information that you would like to share?