First-year teachers Perceptions of the mentoring component of the new teacher Induction Progra
FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE MENTORING COMPONENT OF THE NEW TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM

by

Bonnie M. Belanger

Bachelor of Science
Columbia College, 1995

Master of Arts
Southern Wesleyan University, 2008

Education Specialist
Augusta State University, 2012

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education in
Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education
University of South Carolina
2018

Accepted by:
Susan Schramm-Pate, Major Professor
Nathaniel Bryan, Committee Member
Suha Tamim, Committee Member
Robert Doan, Committee Member
Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
DEDICATION

Francine, you were an incredible blessing to me the year my professional career began. As a first-year teacher, I had numerous needs and struggles, but you shared your professional knowledge, friendship, and unconditional acceptance. The sense of connectedness between us allowed me to be the best first-year teacher I could be! You gave of yourself happily and freely. My struggles were your struggles. My accomplishments were your accomplishments. You became the duality that Nel Noddings describes. You inspired me from that year forward to care for others as you cared for me. I have spent the last 12 years mentoring other first-year teachers modeling that which I learned from you! I can only hope and pray I have touched others as beautifully and as powerfully as you touched me. I dedicate this dissertation to you, my dear friend and mentor.

“I receive the other into myself and I see and feel with the other. I become a duality”

Nel Noddings
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have so many people I wish to acknowledge. First, I would like to acknowledge my Lord as He assured me throughout this process, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!” (Philippians 4:13) Oh, the strength I needed! I would also like to thank my precious husband, Kevin for standing by me and cheering me on. I wish to acknowledge my children, Zachary and Kasey for dealing with their mom being a student so MANY years of their lives! I want to acknowledge my advisor, Dr. Susan Schramm-Pate for her endless comments and critiques, which allowed me to finish in the scheduled three years! Thank you to my mom, dad, and other family members for always checking in on me and seeing how I was doing. Lastly, I want to acknowledge and thank my colleagues, friends, and prayer warriors. I truly would not have made it to this point without you and your endless prayers.
The present action research study examines first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program (NTI Program) and specifically levels of helpfulness of their mentors in the Eastern Georgia School District (pseudonym). The Eastern Georgia School District (EGSD) lacked a comprehensive induction program; therefore, EGSD developed the NTI Program to assist first-year teachers as they transition into their professional careers. The data set comprises a survey and semi-structured interviews collected at the end of the 2016-2017 school year. Descriptive statistics and an inductive analysis allowed data to be analyzed and interpreted. Findings of the study indicate, the first-year teachers in the EGSD perceive the mentoring program to be ‘very helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’ with the majority of first-year teachers’ perceptions being ‘extremely helpful’. Three distinct patterns identified from the data collected and analyzed include: professional growth, emotional support, and feelings of isolation, which emerge into one broad theme: the need for intentional and ethical caring. The action plan is designed to improve mentor selection and training, and to create more flexibility with teacher observations. A reciprocal plan to continually add the voices of the first-year teachers to the NTI team is an additional focus of the action plan.

Keywords: induction program, mentoring, mentor, first-year teacher, attrition, ethic of caring, action research
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.......................................................................................................................... iii

Acknowledgements......................................................................................................... iv

Abstract......................................................................................................................... v

List of Tables .................................................................................................................. ix

Chapter 1: Introduction....................................................................................................1
  Problem of Practice Statement....................................................................................1
  Research Question & Objectives ..............................................................................5
  Purpose Statement.....................................................................................................7
  Scholarly Literature ..................................................................................................7
  Key Words/Glossary ..................................................................................................8
  Potential Weaknesses ..............................................................................................9
  The Significance of the Study..................................................................................10
  Overview of the Study ...........................................................................................10

Chapter 2: Literature Review.........................................................................................14
  Conceptual Framework............................................................................................16
  Themes & Ideas .......................................................................................................17
  Points of View .........................................................................................................18
  Summaries of Literature ........................................................................................21
  Variables or Themes ...............................................................................................27
  Primary & Secondary Sources ..............................................................................31
Methodologies........................................................................................................31
Conclusion .............................................................................................................32
Chapter 3: Methodology ...........................................................................................35
Action Research Paradigm....................................................................................35
Researcher.............................................................................................................39
Participants............................................................................................................42
Setting ...................................................................................................................43
Instrumentation & Materials ...............................................................................43
Data Collection .....................................................................................................45
Data Analysis & Reflection ...............................................................................45
Conclusion ............................................................................................................47
Chapter 4: Findings & Interpretation of Results .........................................................49
Data Collection Strategy .......................................................................................52
Ongoing Analysis & Reflection ............................................................................52
Reflective Stance ..................................................................................................54
Data Analysis ........................................................................................................56
Coding...................................................................................................................64
Data Interpretation ...............................................................................................67
Answering the Research Question ......................................................................77
Conclusion ............................................................................................................81
Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Action Plan .................................................83
Key Questions.......................................................................................................86
Action Researcher .................................................................................................87
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing an Action Plan</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Action Plan</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Educational Change</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Research Findings</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for Future Research</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Survey</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: New Teacher Handbook</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Highly Qualified Personnel</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: NTI Team Meeting Minutes</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: Human Resource Mission Statement</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F: Ethnic Distribution of Students</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G: Consent Form</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H: Semi-Structured Interview</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 First-Year Teachers’ Perceptions of Mentor’s Levels of Helpfulness ..........7
Table 4.2 Demographics of Teacher-Participants..........................................................9
Table 4.3 Assigned Mentors .......................................................................................22
Table 4.4 First-Year Teachers’ Perceptions of Mentoring Component.......................24
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Induction programs have been in existence for approximately fifty years in the United States in an attempt to alleviate our nation’s teacher attrition crisis, improve teacher satisfaction, and ultimately improved student achievement. According to California’s New Teacher Center (NTC), “a successful induction program regularly self-assesses to discover what is effective and what needs improvement” (New Teacher Center, 2016, p. 1). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) believes new teachers need three to seven years of experience to become highly effective teachers and they assert effective induction programs must have four vital components: reduced course load, support from administration, professional development, and mentoring. Eastern Georgia School District (pseudonym) is in the midst of self-assessing and has discovered the need to reconfigure its induction program to include but not limited to the mentoring component in hopes of improving job satisfaction, teacher retention rate, and ultimately, student achievement.

Problem of Practice Statement

Teacher attrition continues to be an overwhelming conundrum in the United States, with rates being reported at about 4% higher than other professions Riggs (2013). Attrition is defined in Georgia as the number of “public school teachers [who] leave education within the first five years of employment” (Owens, 2015, p. 2). The state of
Georgia loses 44% of their public-school teachers within the first five years of teaching (Owens, 2015). “Across all subgroups, teachers agree that monetary rewards (salary or bonuses) are less important than other factors (i.e., positive working environments, quality classroom resources, and strong leadership) when it comes to keeping great educators in the classroom” (Scholastic and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012, p. 57).

According to the EGSD’s Director of Human Resources, exit surveys of the district’s teachers who left their teaching positions prior to retirement revealed job dissatisfaction, lack of support from administration, and isolated work conditions; consequently, the teacher attrition rate continues to be problematic (B. Wilson, personal communication, April 18, 2016). According to the Assistant Superintendent of Student Learning, EGSD has felt the greatest impact of the teacher attrition rate in the “ability to roll out and maintain new initiatives” (N. Whitman, personal communication, April 18, 2016). Although the county’s rate of attrition is lower than the state and national averages, the county believes that teacher retention is necessary in order to ensure student achievement is not affected.

Global research documents the necessity of mentoring new teachers in the induction phase (first three years of teaching) to decrease the likelihood of attrition (Kent, Green, Feldman, 2012). Prior to the present action research study, EGSD lacked a thorough mentoring program; therefore, in October 2015, the district began creating a comprehensive induction program, which includes mentoring to assist first-year teachers with the transition to their new careers and increase job satisfaction.
Rationale

Teacher quality has been identified as the most prevalent factor in student learning from which the effects are cumulative and long lasting (Hightower et al., 2011). Ellen Moir, the Founder and CEO of California’s New Teacher Center (NTC) believes there is a widespread need for providing support for all educators in order to empower them to grow and improve in their profession (Moir, 2015). Eisner (2013) contends, “schools will not be better for students than they are for the professionals who work in them” (p. 285). Significant changes are needed in order to ensure all schools are equipped with effective educators. Induction programs are necessary factors for schools in providing a healthy environment for first-year teachers to develop the craft of teaching, survive isolated conditions, and succeed as teachers. According to Ingersoll and Strong (2011), mentoring programs are “investments that enhance the effectiveness of new teachers, can add to the attractiveness of the job, improve teacher retention and improve other outcomes” (p. 206). Mentoring from highly qualified teachers is needed in order to improve the preservation of novice teachers.

Eastern Georgia School District recognizes the importance of retaining effective teachers to accelerate student learning as well as the need for a strong induction process to ensure effective teachers remain in the classroom; therefore, the district has recently implemented the New Teacher Induction Program (NTI Program), which has been designed to better support its new teachers through a more comprehensive and intentional mentoring program. The mission of the NTI Program is to “help beginning teachers make a successful transition into teaching by providing extensive support through the first three years of teaching” (Appendix B). The NTI Program will focus on the
following:

- retaining effective teachers
- improving beginning teachers’ skills and performance
- supporting teacher morale, communications, and collegiality
- building a sense of professionalism, positive attitude
- facilitating a seamless transition into the first year of teaching
- putting theory into practice
- preventing teacher isolation
- building self-reflection (see Appendix B)

Mentors are responsible for helping new teachers obtain all needed materials at the onset of the year, explaining applicable routines and schedules, and providing a tour of the building and introducing support staff. Throughout the year, mentors provide opportunities for new teachers to observe the mentor and/or other master teachers provide instruction, participate in follow-up discussions that allow the new teacher to be self-reflective. Mentors provide support in learning the standards and curriculum, assist in refining teaching strategies, and help identify the needs of all students and their various learning styles. The mentor also provides professional support such as determining appropriate professional development, providing personal support, serving as a liaison to other teachers and sharing educational resources. This permits the first-year teacher to be exposed to a variety of instructional practices, and allows opportunities to build a confidential and professional relationship. Mentors are required to meet with their first-year teachers weekly and document the time spent together quarterly. Due to the extensive support mentors provide to first-year teachers, the district will adhere to the 1:1
ratio of mentor to mentee so as not to overburden the mentors and will compensate the
mentor with a $500 stipend.

The selection of mentors is vital to the success of the NTI Program; therefore the
mentor must be an outstanding teacher who regularly achieves ratings of proficient and
exemplary on the Teacher Keys Effective System, with a minimum score of twenty-four.
He/she must be a classroom teacher with a minimum of three years experience and be
recommended by the principal. Once selected, mentors must attend a summer meeting as
well as scheduled meetings throughout the year with the Induction Coordinator, complete
quarterly logs documenting time spent with the new teacher, and make scheduled visits
with the first-year teacher on a weekly basis.

Research Question & Objectives

Research Question

What are the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the
New Teacher Induction Program in Eastern Georgia School District?

Evolution of research question. Inherent in designing a research plan, several
steps occurred, the first of which was selecting a topic. Eastern Georgia School District
(EGSD) created a design team for the New Teacher Induction Program in the fall of
2015. One mentor each from the elementary, middle, and high school level was selected
along with a new teacher from each level. Together they were teamed with a principal
from all three levels, the Director of Human Resources for EGSD, the Director of
Elementary Curriculum, an Instructional Specialist, an associate professor from the local
university, and the Assistant Superintendent of Student Learning. At the first meeting,
the team was given the devastating statistics recently reported by the state of Georgia concerning the teacher attrition rate and told by the Assistant Superintendent of Student Learning, Mrs. Whitman (pseudonym) that the team must design and implement a comprehensive induction program consisting of a mentoring program for the district’s new teachers in hopes of increasing teacher satisfaction and decreasing the attrition rate of teachers (M. Whitman, personal communication, April 18, 2016).

**Importance of research question.** The significance of the research question and findings will impact all first-year teachers and mentors in the district that take part in the mentoring process. The findings will also impact the decisions and changes the design team makes for the induction program. Because the local university is a stakeholder as well, the findings could ultimately change the methods in which first-year teachers are prepared and recent graduates are supported. Lastly, EGSD has a vested interest in the results of the present action research study as the county hopes to design and implement an effective induction program that ultimately retains highly qualified teachers, which in turn will continue to positively impact student achievement.

**Objectives**

The main objectives of the study are to collect first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program, evaluate the data, summarize the findings and implications, and lastly to develop an action plan to modify or reconfigure the program based on the voices of the first-year teachers.
Purpose Statement

The novice teachers’ voices are important to the District that is desirous of creating a ‘family-like’ culture amongst the school personnel and community. In order to create this culture, the District is focused on ways to not only recruit the best and brightest, but also retain them (see Appendix E). The primary purpose of the present action research study is to describe 18 first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program in the EGSD. Following Wong, Breaux, and Klar (2003), the secondary purpose of the action research is to improve the NTI Program so a family-like culture amongst teachers, school personnel, and administrators can be created and sustained. Mentoring “must be a component of a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained induction process” where new teachers are immersed in the district’s culture and quickly become a part of the school’s family (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 5). Collectively, this study was conducted to assess the value of the newly designed mentoring component of the NTI Program followed by the development of an action plan to make necessary modifications to the current NTI Program to meet the needs of future novice teachers.

Scholarly Literature

An investigation of several theorists on induction programs, mentoring, and the ethic of care were critical to the development of the present action research study of the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the NTI Program.
**Key Words/Glossary**

**Definition of Key Words**

*First-year teacher:* a teacher who is in his/her first year of teaching

*Highly qualified teacher:* “one who has a positive effect on student learning and development through a combination of content mastery, command of a broad set of pedagogic and communications/interpersonal skills. Quality teachers are life-long learners in their subject areas, teach with commitment, and are reflective upon their teaching practice. They transfer knowledge of their subject matter and the learning process through good communication, diagnostic skills, understanding of different learning styles and cultural influences, knowledge about child development, and the ability to marshal a broad array of techniques to meet student needs. They set high expectations and support students in achieving them. They establish an environment conducive to learning, and leverage available resources outside as well as inside the classroom” (The Center for High Impact Philanthropy, 2010).

*Induction program:* “an organized, sustained, multiyear process structured by a school or district of which mentoring may be an integral component” (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 18).

*Mentoring:* “the personal guidance provided, usually by seasoned veterans to beginning teachers in schools” (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 683).

*Mentor:* a highly qualified teacher leader who desires to improve the preservation of new teachers by assisting them with professional growth, development, and success
Novice teacher: a teacher who has taught for less than three years

Teacher attrition: the process of reducing the number of teachers in the profession

Teacher retention: the ability to keep teachers in the classroom and lessen the transfers between schools or districts or quitting the profession altogether (Lasagna, 2009)

Potential Weaknesses

Assumptions

In this action research study, one assumption will be made. It is assumed the new teachers who participate in the survey and interviews will be honest and provide accurate responses.

Limitations

The study will be limited to the new teachers in the induction program in Eastern Georgia School District. Secondly, it will be limited to teachers who choose to participate in the survey.

Delimitations

The present action research study will be restricted by several delimitations. First, the study will only evaluate the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program as perceived by the participants of the survey. Second, the results will only represent the first-year teachers’ perceptions during the 2016-2017 school year. Lastly, because it is specific to EGSD, generalizability is limited.
The Significance of the Study

Numerous professional applications occurred based on the findings of the present action research study. By exploring the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the various structures of the mentoring component of the NTI Program, future mentors can foster new ideas and add to their professional improvement as a mentor. Future novice teachers will also benefit as the study promotes cyclical action to improve the NTI Program based on the voices of present first-year teachers. Participants of the present study may also find the results helpful in their second and third years with their mentors. The NTI team benefitted tremendously as they utilized the feedback and voices of the participants to make modifications to the program. Lastly, the research provided district principals with valuable information to better assist them with the mentor selection process. Clearly, the professional value of this present action research study reached a multitude of professionals in the EGSD in the present and will continue to in the future.

Overview of the Study

The focus of this action research study was to examine the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program in EGSD. Chapter One presents the local problem of practice, in which exit surveys of the district’s teachers who left their teaching positions prior to retirement revealed job dissatisfaction, lack of support from administration, and isolated work conditions. Consequently, the teacher attrition rate within the district continues to be problematic. In response to the district’s lack of a comprehensive induction program, the school district reconfigured its mentoring component within their induction program in hopes of improving the teacher satisfaction,
retention, and ultimately, student achievement. One research question guides the present action research study: *What are the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program in Eastern Georgia School District?*

Chapter Two presents a review of literature documenting the need of comprehensive induction programs for novice teachers to help in building professional learning communities, (Feiman-Nemser, 2012) and introducing them to their new “responsibilities, missions, and beliefs of their schools and districts, insuring their success from their very first day of teaching” (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 25). A vital component of effective induction programs is mentoring (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003); therefore, the second section of the review focuses on mentoring. The third section of the literature review focuses on the documented needs of the novice teacher. Finally, a detailed description of Noddings’s (1984) theory of the ethic of care is also presented in Chapter Two as it frames the present DiP and the data collected is filtered through Noddings’s lens.

Chapter Three outlines a description of the recruitment and selection of participants and the methodology utilized to answer the research question. Eastern Georgia School District employed 1,880 teachers in the 2016-2017 school year. The school district has thirty-two schools serving 25,532 students in Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade. All first-year teachers were asked to complete a survey (see Appendix A) at the end of the 2016-2017 school year. The survey was optional; subsequently, those who responded were the participants in the present action research study. In the present action research study, the researcher utilized an explanatory mixed-
methods research design to employ both qualitative and quantitative data. This method was selected as a means to gather a variety of quantitative information from all first-year teachers in the district relatively quickly and inexpensively and to gather specific and detailed experiences from two of the participants through semi-structured interviews.

Chapter Four presents the findings and implications of the study. The data collected from the 18 teacher-participants were analyzed using descriptive statistics, “simple mathematical procedures that serve to simplify, summarize, and organize relatively large amounts of numerical data” (Mertler, 2014, p. 169). Following the survey, two of the participants were selected for semi-structured interviews based on their close working relationship with the teacher-researcher and their bipolar experiences. Their responses were analyzed using inductive analysis. Three distinct patterns were identified from the data collected and analyzed during this study, which include: professional growth, emotional support, and feelings of isolation. From the patterns, one broad theme was recognized: the need for intentional and ethical caring.

The conclusions presented in Chapter Five revealed an overwhelming majority of teacher-participants believe the mentoring component of the induction program to be ‘very helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’. Over 66% stated the NTI Program had positive effects on their decisions to remain in the profession. The overall findings revealed 75% of teacher-participants expressed their mentoring experience was a success in terms of helpfulness. An overwhelming majority perceived their mentors to be ‘very helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’ in areas of professional growth, emotional support, and acceptance within a family-like culture, which coincide with Nel Noddings’s (1984) model of caring and relationship building. The voices of the first-year teachers assisted in the
development of an action plan, as described in Chapter Five, which includes an increase in the number of peer observations, additional assistance with lesson planning, scheduled release time with their mentors, and comprehensive mentor training.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Induction programs have been in existence for approximately fifty years in the United States in an attempt to alleviate our nation’s teacher attrition crisis, improve student achievement, and assimilate new teachers to their profession. According to Kent, Green, and Feldman (2012), the United States’ induction programs are ill defined, vary greatly from one state to another, and are “plagued with unrealistic or unreasonable expectations of both mentor teachers and new teachers” (p. 3). “Teachers need from three to seven years in the field to become highly skilled – with the analytic and flexible thinking needed to engage learners, deepen their conceptual understanding, and respond to how well they are living” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014, p. 5). Therefore, it is critical to have a relentless focus on mentoring new teachers through the use of induction programs.

The review of literature based on comprehensive mentoring programs and the specific challenges novice teachers face during the first year of teaching provide the basis for the present action research study. Chapter Two provides the conceptual framework (see Figure 2.1), major themes and ideas, similar and contrasting points of view, and a description of differing methodologies used to investigate the various outcomes of mentoring programs.
Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

**PoP:** lack a comprehensive induction program

**PURPOSE:** to examine new teachers’ perceptions and gather their voices

**WHO:** 18 first-year teachers

**WHERE:** Eastern Georgia School District

**HOW:** surveys and interviews

**WHEN:** 2016-2017 school year

**SUPPORTING RESEARCH:**
Induction and mentoring:
1. Ingersoll
2. Wong
3. Feiman-Nemser

Care Theory:
1. Noddings
2. Goldstein

**RQ:** What are the first year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program in Eastern Georgia School District?

**WHY:** to develop an action plan to improve the induction program based on the voices of the first-year teachers’ perceptions; create a culture of caring
**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework (see Figure 2.1) for the present action research study identifies the need for retaining novice teachers by increasing job satisfaction through professional development and emotional support. Comprehensive induction programs are necessary roles for schools in providing a healthy environment for first-year teachers to develop the craft of teaching, survive isolated conditions, and succeed as teachers. According to Ingersoll and Strong (2011), mentoring programs are “investments that enhance the effectiveness of new teachers, can add to the attractiveness of the job, improve teacher retention and improve other outcomes” (p. 206).

Related to the conceptual framework of the present action research study, the theory of caring corresponds to the relational experiences between the mentor and novice teacher. Nel Noddings’s understood connections between the caring-one (mentor) and cared-for (novice teacher) provides the foundation for the relationship. When one cares, his/her “motive energy begins to flow toward the needs and wants of the cared-for” (Noddings, 2010a, para. 5). As the cared-for responds, a caring encounter occurs. Gilligan (2011) states, “the ethics of care starts from the premise that as humans we are inherently relational, responsive beings and the human condition is one of connectedness or interdependence” (para. 2).

The purpose of the present action research study is to examine the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program in EGSD. Research has shown the impact comprehensive induction programs have on the retention of quality teachers (Kent, Green & Feldman, 2012), student achievement (Ingersoll &
Strong, 2011), and it empowers them to grow and improve in their profession (Moir, 2015).

The school district (EGSD) created and implemented a comprehensive induction program during the 2016-2017 school year. Eighteen teachers participated in a survey in May 2017 followed by semi-structured interviews of two teachers with bipolar experiences. The surveys and interviews allowed the voices of first year teachers in EGSD to be heard and assisted in the development of an action plan for future first-year teachers.

**Themes & Ideas**

The literature on induction over the last 50 years has shifted views from the view of induction as a bridge from teacher preparation programs into teaching, followed by a view of induction as individualized professional development, to its more current view of induction “as a process of incorporating new teachers into collaborative professional learning communities” (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 12). A major element of all induction programs should be a strong and comprehensive mentoring component (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

According to Sanderson (2003), research states, “beginning teachers face many harsh realities during their first year of teaching and are often forced into situations where they are required to masquerade as experts” (p. 70). Several of the documented needs during the induction phase include professional growth, emotional support, and the need to feel accepted within the school’s culture. Quality mentors are a vital component to the survival of new teachers as they face these harsh realities. Rowley (1999) believes there
are six basic but essential qualities found in a good mentor; someone who is committed to
the role, accepting of the beginning teacher, skilled at providing support, effective in a
variety of interpersonal contexts, a model of a continuous learner, and who communicates
hope and optimism.

The review of literature found in Chapter Two summarizes the research
supporting induction programs, mentoring, and first-year teachers’ needs. Collectively,
a comprehensive induction program has the ability to build a “culture of people working
together as a family” (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 14) and provide the needed
support of first-year teachers.

Points of View

Due to the varying constructs of each induction program, the administration of the
programs, and direction of each study, the research outcomes of the studies differed
dramatically. The relationship of the present action research study overlaps with some of
the following studies’ constructs, direction, and/or outcomes.

Negative Impact

Several studies described in the literature about induction programs and
mentoring revealed negative impacts which include, inconsistently administered
programs (LoCascio, Smeaton, & Waters, 2016), inequities between low-income and
high-income schools (Kardos & Johnson, 2010), and inconsistent mentoring standards
(Benson, 2008). The aforementioned studies examined induction programs across their
respective states unlike the present action research study, which focused on one particular
district in the state of Georgia.
Neutral Impact

The following studies conducted within the last decade revealed neither negative or positive impacts. Williams and Gillham (2016) conducted research on the new teachers’ perceptions of the Ohio Resident Educator Program (OREP), the state’s induction program for new teachers, which had recently undergone significant changes. The “findings indicate that the beginning teachers do not believe the Ohio Resident Educator Program improved their ability to meet these standards” (Williams & Gillham, 2016, p. 218). Another study conducted in Texas by Wilson and Lumadue (2013) examined the new teachers’ perceptions of an induction program in one school district in Texas. Wilson and Lumadue’s study parallels the present action research study as it also examined new teachers’ perceptions within one school district. Their study revealed there were no significant effects, whereas the present action research study revealed positive impacts.

Positive Impact

Numerous studies of induction programs found in the literature revealed a variety of positive effects. Taranto (2014) researched the effectiveness of an online learning community as part of a new-teacher induction program in Pennsylvania. The results showed a positive response to the online program with 100% of the first-year teachers who agreed and/or strongly agreed with the helpfulness of the program in all four professional development themes. Overall, Taranto’s (2014) findings from a qualitative point of view indicated “a strong acceptance of the online learning community as an
effective component of a new-teacher induction program” (p. 13). Similarly, Flanagan (2010) conducted a study of 54,001 teachers across the United States in hopes of finding possible relationships between new teachers’ feelings of preparedness and their induction programs. Flanagan’s findings, similar to the present action research study showed teachers had a strong feeling of preparedness associated with their respective induction programs.

In the area of retention, Perry and Hayes (2011) found one district-wide induction program to be very effective, evidenced by the number of teachers hired in 1999 and those retained in 2005. Freemyer, Townsend, Freemyer, and Baldwin’s (2010) study was conducted in response to the state legislature’s decision to “withdraw financial support for mentors and mentor training in 2005” (p. 3). From this study, the researchers concluded having a mentor led to a greater impact on teacher longevity. Kent, Green, and Feldman (2012) conducted research in order to present an “overview of the components of a statewide mentoring initiative that focused on developing teacher leaders and the initial impact of its implementation” (p. 1). Research concluded that the statewide mentoring program helped retain new teachers; 2% did not return for the second year and the state average had typically been 10%. Lastly, Roff (2012) conducted a qualitative case study among sixteen teachers from two school districts in New York to address first-year teachers’ perceptions of their mentoring programs. The new teachers received profound support in a safe and non-judgmental environment, with a feeling of mutual trust, and principals “found an increase in retention due to the emergence of the mentoring program” (Roff, 2012, p. 38). The findings of the first-year teachers’
perceptions of support and mutual trust is similar to the findings of the present action
research study.

Summaries of Literature

Induction Programs

A growing number of states, school districts, and schools have developed and
implemented various induction programs for beginning teachers in response to the
overwhelming high turnover of teachers, especially within the first five years of teaching
induction holds that teaching is complex work, that preemployment teacher preparation is
rarely sufficient to provide all of the knowledge and skill necessary to successful
teaching, and that a significant portion can be acquired only while on the job” (p. 202).

The literature on induction over the last 50 years has shifted views from the view
of induction as a bridge from teacher preparation programs into teaching, followed by a
view of induction as individualized professional development, to its more current view of
induction “as a process of incorporating new teachers into collaborative professional
learning communities” (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 12). Regardless of the view, induction
programs are support systems “to both enhance and prevent the loss of teachers’ human
capital, with the ultimate aim of improving and the growth and learning of students”
(Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, p. 203). “Thinking about induction as a phase in teacher
development and a process of teacher socialization reminds us that, for better or for
worse, induction happens with or without a formal program” (Feiman-Nemser, Schwille,
schools and districts “have an induction program that trains, supports and acculturates new teachers by introducing them to the responsibilities, missions, and beliefs of their schools and districts, insuring their success from their very first day of teaching” (p. 25).

Formal induction programs can offer various activities to include orientation, collaboration, professional development, extra classroom assistance, reduced workloads, mentoring (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), and they are “designed to train and acculturate new teachers in the academic standards and vision of the district” (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 20). As induction program policies and practices are tailored to meet the needs of today’s novice teachers, “induction can be a catalyst for building professional learning communities in which teachers across all levels of experience work together to ensure powerful teaching and learning” (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 16). An induction program should aspire to build a “culture of people working together as a family” (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 14). No two induction programs are the same as they should cater to the specific needs and culture of the district. “The best induction programs provide connection, because they are structured within learning communities where new and veteran teachers interact and treat each other with respect and are valued for their respective contributions” (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 22).

**Mentoring Programs**

Historically, the first year of teaching has been considered a crucial and problematic period for teachers as it presents a variety of challenges (Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008). Equally challenging is determining the best ways to support first-year teachers as they transition to their new careers. A vital component of effective induction
programs is mentoring (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003). According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014), beginning teachers reported working with a mentor has increased from 50% in 1990 to nearly 90% in 2008. Ingersoll and Strong (2011), believe mentoring programs are “investments that enhance the effectiveness of new teachers, can add to the attractiveness of the job, improve teacher retention and improve other outcomes” (p. 206). Numerous studies provide empirical support to the claim that providing novice teachers with support and assistance positively impacts teacher commitment, instructional practices, and/or student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

Mentoring programs typically consist of a formal mentor assigned to the novice teacher, a stipend, and mentor training. Each of the aforementioned criteria can vary from one program to another. Often times, the mentor is a colleague or retired teacher, stipends vary in amounts, and mentor training can be non existent, informal, or formal training. Darling-Hammond and Rothman (2015) believe mentoring programs must be ongoing and comprehensive in order to be most effective.

**Induction vs. mentoring.** Often times, the terms ‘mentoring’ and ‘induction’ are misused. “Induction is an organized, sustained, multiyear process structured by a school or district, of which mentoring may be an integral component” (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 18). Mentoring is an action; it is “the personal guidance provided, usually by seasoned veterans to beginning teachers in schools” (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 683).

**Quality mentors.** Mentors are a vital component of the induction program, and according to Wong (2004), mentors are “perhaps the most important component of an
induction program, but they must be part of an induction process aligned to the district’s vision, mission, and structure” (p. 42). To improve student achievement and the preservation of novice teachers, highly qualified teacher leaders are needed as mentors. Some of the necessary qualifications for mentors are teacher leaders who understand long-term educational goals, are able to assist new teachers with effective teaching strategies, and are willing to commit additional time interacting with those teachers (Kent, Green, & Feldman, 2012). Other beneficial characteristics include “strong intra- and inter-personal skills, experience with adult learners, respect of peers, and current knowledge of professional development” (New Teacher Center, 2016, p. 1). Rowley (1999) believes there are six basic but essential qualities found in a good mentor; someone who is committed to the role, accepting of the beginning teacher, skilled at providing support, effective in a variety of interpersonal contexts, a model of a continuous learner, and who communicates hope and optimism.

Most comprehensive induction programs formally assign a mentor whose roles and responsibilities include; “providing the novice teacher with a basic orientation of school procedures, norms, and expectations to help the novice teacher integrate and/or design a standards-based curriculum that is responsive to the students’ learning needs” (Hobson, Harris, Buckner-Manley & Smith, 2012, p. 69). Quality mentoring occurs when thoughtful preparation is combined with dedicated and ongoing support (Wiebke & Bardin, 2009).
Novice Teachers’ Needs

According to Sanderson (2003), research states, “beginning teachers face many harsh realities during their first year of teaching and are often forced into situations where they are required to masquerade as experts” (p. 70). Birkeland and Feiman-Nemser (2012) believe, many American schools “treat novice teachers as experts from the first day on the job, maintain norms of autonomy and isolation that limit new teachers’ access to colleagues’ expertise and organize teachers’ work so that opportunities for ongoing professional learning are rare” (p. 111). Several of the documented needs during the induction phase include professional growth, emotional support, and the need to feel accepted within the school’s culture.

Professional growth. According to Feiman-Nemser (2001), for first-year teachers “induction brings a shift in role orientation and an epistemological move from knowing about teaching through formal study to knowing how to teach by confronting the day-to-day challenges” (p. 1027). Therefore, professional development must be afforded to novice teacher and may include peer observations and reflection (McNally, 2014; Moir & Stobbe, 1995) or job-embedded professional development (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012). It is imperative to create opportunities for beginning teachers to learn throughout their careers; private unreflective experiences do not produce necessary growth (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). According to Wong, Breaux, and Klar (2003), new teachers desire to be part of a team, part of a culture; therefore, “the focus of induction is on creating a learning community” (p. 5). In a learning community, novice teachers are provided opportunities to observe others, be observed, collaborate and grow together, and develop a respect for the work of one another. Wong (2004) states, “the best induction
programs provide connection because they are structured within learning communities where new and veteran teachers interact and treat each other with respect and are valued for their respective contributions” (p. 50).

**Emotional support.** Often times, novice teachers’ experiences at the onset of the year are overwhelming; therefore most first-year teachers appreciate the emotional support provided to them during this critical time (Scott, 2001). Emotional support can include short visits to check in to gauge their needs and well-being, debriefs providing support after specific challenges, offering acceptance, and building self-esteem (Israel, Kamman, McCray & Sindelar, 2014). School cultures that “stress mutual responsibility and collaboration are cultures in which new teachers can ask questions and seek support” (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 115).

**Family-like culture, not isolation.** “The early years of teaching are undeniably a time of intense learning, and they are often a time of intense loneliness (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 10). “Although elementary and secondary teaching involves intensive interaction with youngsters, the work of teachers is largely done in isolation from colleagues” (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004, p. 2). Teachers’ feelings of isolation create a “thirst for more opportunities to network, share and collaborate with their peers. They want a culture that acknowledges, respects and nurtures them as professionals” (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 14). Birkeland and Feiman-Nemser (2012) note a shared understanding of school staff promotes genuine collaboration as well as a culture that promotes an exchange of professional knowledge. Those increased opportunities to share knowledge allows novice teachers to reflect on their craft, enhance their skills, and advance their careers. According to Wong, Breaux, and Klar (2003), “collegial
interchange, not isolation, must become the norm for teachers” (p. 22). The era of teacher isolation must be exchanged for a family-like culture of all teachers, both novice and veteran, working together.

**Variables or Themes**

**Ethic of Care**

Emotional support, strong interpersonal relationships, ideal interactions with mentors, and feelings of mutual trust are characteristics that define many first-year teachers’ perceptions of the iterations with their mentors (Kardos & Johnson, 2010; Kent, Green, and Feldman, 2012; Roff, 2012). Noddings’ (1984) ethic of caring can be used to frame the relationship between a mentor and first-year teacher. Traditional definitions and understandings of caring include gentle smiles and warm hugs, which assumes caring to be a feeling or personality trait. Consequently, caring is not perceived as an intellectual act. According to Goldstein (2002), caring has “deeply ethical, philosophical, and experiential roots” (p. 9). Nel Noddings (1984) emphasizes the deep moral dimension of caring: “One must meet the other in caring. From this requirement there is no escape for one who would be moral” (p. 201). Goldstein (1998) describes Noddings’s caring encounter as “an encounter between one-caring and a cared-for characterized by engrossment and motivational displacement on the part of the one-caring and reciprocity of the part of the cared-for” (p. 8). Gilligan (2011) defines ethics of care:

As an ethic grounded in voice and relationships, in the importance of everyone having a voice, being listened to carefully (in their own right and on their own terms) and heard with respect. An ethics of care directs our attention to the need for responsiveness
in relationships (paying attention, listening, responding) and to the costs of losing connection with oneself or with others. (para. 4).

**Caring-one.** The caring-one gives her full attention to the cared-for and she is receptive to the specific situation and perspective of the cared-for. Noddings (1984) affirms this encounter, called engrossment, is not based on empathy but one that allows the caring-one to feel with the cared-for. “I receive the other into myself and I see and feel with the other. I become a duality” (Noddings, 1984, p. 30). The key component in the ethic of care is receptivity, the act of fully receiving the other (Goldstein, 2002). As a result, motivational displacement, the moment in which the caring-one puts the goals and needs of the cared-for at the forefront occurs. Noddings (1984) states, motivational displacement “involves stepping out of one’s own personal frame of reference and into the other’s” (p. 24). In a true caring encounter, the caring-one must exhibit both engrossment and motivational displacement, regardless of the depth of feeling and the cared-for must acknowledge the care given.

**Cared-for.** In this caring relationship, it is the responsibility of the cared-for to reciprocate. This can be accomplished in a variety of forms, such as a hand shake, hug, or words of gratitude. Noddings (1984) notes the importance of this reciprocity: “whatever the one-caring does is validated and made meaningful, or diminished and made meaningless, by the response of the cared-for. Thinking about mentorly caring using Noddings work as the conceptual framework allows us to fully comprehend the intellectual aspects of caring; therefore, caring can be seen as a sound foundation for mentoring practices. “What is learned from caring teachers [mentors] willing to share
their knowledge and their pleasure in learning is often incidental and very powerful precisely because it is given freely” (Noddings, 2010a, para. 16).

**Caring Relations**

Caring is neither an isolated feeling or a momentary relationship, but rather a process (Mayeroff, 1972). Noddings (2010a) describes the fundamental difference between ‘caring’ in the virtuous sense as a person who professes to care about someone and ‘caring’ in the relational sense, which forces one to look at the relation between two people. Customarily, Western tradition regards virtues as personal possessions (Noddings, 2010a). John Dewey (1930) rejected this view and countered with his thoughts of virtues as “working adaptations of personal capacities with environing forces” (p. 16). “Care theorists expand this Deweyan insight and emphasize the role of our partners in interaction as a central factor in environing forces” (Noddings, 2010a, para. 7). Gilligan (2011) states, “the ethics of care starts from the premise that as humans we are inherently relational, responsive beings and the human condition is one of connectedness or interdependence” (para. 2). Mayeroff (1972) states, “in helping the other grow I do not impose my own directions; rather, I allow the direction of the other’s growth to guide what I do, to help determine how I am to respond and what is relevant to such response” (p. 9). Goldstein (2002) shares that by reexamining caring through the ethic of care, the concept of care is transformed “from a personality trait to a deliberate and decisive act” (p. 16) involving several elements.

Devotion is an essential element in caring. “It is through devotion that caring for this other acquires substance and its own particular character; caring develops in the
process of overcoming obstacles and difficulties” (Mayeroff, 1972, p. 10). In the relationship between a mentor and first-year teacher, one must consider the part each participant plays. Noddings (2010a) notes, when one cares, his/her “motive energy begins to flow toward the needs and wants of the cared-for” (para. 5). The mentor must comprehend the needs of his/her mentee, their powers and limitations, and “what is conducive to his [mentee’s] growth” (Mayeroff, 1972, p. 19). Likewise, the mentor must recognize his own powers and limitations and understand how to properly respond to the needs of the other.

Caring relations are imperfect: “either party may lose attentiveness, respond inappropriately to the other or not respond at all, or find the response thwarted by circumstances beyond either party’s control” (Noddings, 2002, p. 14). Caring-for depends on face-to-face interactions. Caring is “developed by disclosing its relationships to other significant concepts like ‘trust’, ‘honesty’, and ‘humility’, and it also grows through coming to terms with seeming expectations” (Mayeroff, 1972, p. 14). A mentor must realize his/her treatment toward the first-year teacher may deeply affect his/her actions in the classroom. Caring mentors must listen and help novice teachers acquire newfound knowledge and experiences that allow them to achieve their professional goals. The caring mentor “strives first to establish and maintain caring relations, and these relations exhibit an integrity that provides a foundation for everything” (Noddings, 2010a, para. 9) mentor and first-year teacher do together. As first-year teachers continue to receive regular episodes of caring from their mentor, their personal capacity to hear the expressed needs of others in their own care grows (Noddings, 2010b). Noddings (2010a)
believes the “caring relation is essential as a starting point and a continuous framework of support” (para. 13).

**Primary & Secondary Sources**


**Methodologies**

**Qualitative**

**Case study.** Lambeth and Lashley (2012) conducted a case study of seven first-year teachers within their school district in the 2006-2007 school year. The researchers conducted audio-taped, semi-structured interviews to gain extensive awareness of their perceptions of the mentoring program and the types of support received throughout the year. LaVine (2016) also utilized a case study approach to document five first-year
physical education teachers. Her primary data source was a 65-minute semi-structured interview focused on the teachers’ perceptions of their mentoring experiences and professional development opportunities. LaVine’s additional data sources include field notes, informal interviews, and a document analysis of the school’s context.

**Narrative.** Conway and Zerman (2004) utilized a descriptive case study design, a collaboration between teacher and researcher, to better understand teaching, mentoring, and induction during the first year of an instrumental music teacher’s career. The researchers chose critical-case sampling to make a dramatic point for music teachers in general.

**Mixed Methods**

Oliver, McConney and Maor (2009) chose to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to document the experiences of thirty-eight first-year Science or Mathematics teachers who participated in a mentoring program. Data sources include surveys, applications, and focus groups. Their views and voices were acknowledged and confirmed that “carefully-designed mentoring, including subject-specific, trained mentors can indeed have substantial positive impacts on the success of beginning teachers in Science and Mathematics” (p. 6).

**Conclusion**

A growing number of states, school districts, and schools have developed and implemented various induction programs for beginning teachers in response to the overwhelming high turnover of teachers, especially within the first five years of teaching (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Chapter Two presents a review of literature documenting the
need of comprehensive induction programs for novice teachers to help in building professional learning communities, (Feiman-Nemser, 2012) and introducing them to their new “responsibilities, missions, and beliefs of their schools and districts, insuring their success from their very first day of teaching” (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 25).

A vital component of effective induction programs is mentoring (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003); therefore, the second section of the review focuses on mentoring. Numerous studies provide empirical support to the claim that providing novice teachers with support and assistance positively impacts teacher commitment, instructional practices, and/or student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Equally important to an induction program is the mentor. Some of the necessary qualifications for mentors are teacher leaders who understand long-term educational goals, are able to assist new teachers with effective teaching strategies, and are willing to commit additional time interacting with those teachers (Kent, Green, & Feldman, 2012).

The final section of the literature review focuses on the documented needs of the novice teacher. Several of the documented needs during the induction phase include professional growth, emotional support, and the need to feel accepted within the school’s culture. According to Sanderson (2003), research states, “beginning teachers face many harsh realities during their first year of teaching and are often forced into situations where they are required to masquerade as experts” (p. 70). Therefore, professional development must be afforded to novice teacher to include peer observations and reflection (McNally, 2014; Moir & Stobbe, 1995) or job-embedded professional development (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Often times, novice teachers’ experiences at the onset of the
year are overwhelming; therefore, most first-year teachers appreciate the emotional support provided to them during this critical time (Scott, 2001). “The early years of teaching are undeniably a time of intense learning, and they are often a time of intense loneliness (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 10). Birkeland and Feiman-Nemser (2012) note a shared understanding of school staff promotes genuine collaboration as well as a culture that promotes an exchange of professional knowledge. Those increased opportunities to share knowledge allows novice teachers to reflect on their craft, enhance their skills, and advance their careers. According to Wong, Breaux, and Klar (2003), “collegial interchange, not isolation, must become the norm for teachers” (p. 22).

A detailed description of Noddings’s (1984) theory of the ethic of care is also presented in Chapter Two as it frames the present DiP and the data collected is filtered through Noddings’s lens. The present action research study is framed in the literature presented in Chapter Two, which provides the research of induction programs, mentoring, the ethic of care, and novice teachers’ needs.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this action research is to examine the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program in Eastern Georgia School District. The research was used to establish an action plan by the NTI team based on the voices of the research participants. This chapter includes a description of the context, role of the researcher, recruitment and selection of participants, and a description of the research design.

Research Question

The following research question was used to guide this action research study.

*What are the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program in Eastern Georgia School District?*

Action Research Paradigm

In the present action research study, the researcher utilized an explanatory mixed-methods research design to employ both qualitative and quantitative data. This method was selected as a means to gather a variety of quantitative information from all first-year teachers in the district relatively quickly and inexpensively and to gather specific and detailed experiences from two of the participants. Had the researcher selected a quantitative research design, it would not have allowed her to conduct semi structured interviews to clarify the data collected from surveys. Likewise, had she chosen a
qualitative research design, the researcher would have neglected the voices of many other first-year teachers. Mertler (2014) states, when using an explanatory mixed-methods design, “the quantitative data and analysis provide the main focus for the overall study results; the qualitative data are used to elaborate on, refine, or further explain the quantitative findings” (p. 104).

The researcher collected quantitative data utilizing a survey, which included both open-ended questions and closed-response rating scales (see Appendix A). Likert-type rating scales were selected to effectively measure teachers’ perceptions. During the development of the survey, continuous reflection of the research question remained at the forefront to ensure all survey questions and statements were accurate and appropriate. Members of the design team of the New Teacher Induction Program were consulted to safeguard the instrument was unbiased. The survey was field tested with second-year teachers prior and necessary adjustments were made. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) remind researchers that change to the original data collection plan, whether major or minor may arise in the process. Since the results of the present action research study were not used for generalizability, Mertler (2014) suggests the educator-researcher be most concerned with the validity of the instrument; therefore, all questions and statements directly addressed the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program. Following the surveys, two participants were purposefully selected for semi-structured interviews as a means to gather the qualitative data.

Data analysis. Data analysis began in the summer of 2017. The closed-response rating scales provided quantitative data, as the respondents had a number of choices from
which to select from. “Descriptive statistics are simple mathematical procedures that serve to simplify, summarize, and organize relatively large amounts of numerical data” (Mertler, 2014, p. 169); therefore, two categories of descriptive statistics were utilized. Measures of central tendency were used to describe the collective levels of opinions of the group. In contrast, measures of dispersion indicate the differences within the group of first-year teachers. Mertler (2014) states that, “the emphasis is clearly on the quantitative data; qualitative data are typically used only to provide a closer look at outliers or extreme cases” (p. 104).

The open-ended questions and interviews provided the qualitative data that could potentially reveal unforeseen feelings and thoughts from the first-year teachers that would not be exposed in closed-response statements. An inductive analysis was conducted to reduce the volume of collected information by organizing the data into patterns and themes (Mertler, 2014). Parsons and Brown (as cited in Mertler, 2014) identified a three-step process of inductive analysis, which includes organization, description, and interpretation. The researcher proceeded with caution to ensure data was not distorted or oversimplified during this process. As mentioned earlier, all collected data were kept secure and confidential ensuring anonymity of all participants.

**Developing.** Formulating an action plan is the premise of the present action research study. During this particular stage, the researcher compiled results of data, interpretations, and final conclusions to formulate an informal action plan (Mertler, 2014). Due to the nature and purpose of the research, the results were shared with the New Teacher Induction Program design team as they have a vested interest in the PoP
and an action plan was created to “reflect on alternative approaches to address the problem” (Mertler, 2014, p. 211).

Ultimately, it was the hope of the educator-researcher that the NTI team have a greater understanding of the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component and from it, the team can continue to make necessary adjustments to the program in order to create the greatest impact on new teachers, teacher retention, and student achievement.

**Reflecting.** Although reflection is listed as the fourth stage of action research, the researcher was reminded the process is not linear; reflection is done throughout the process (Mertler, 2014). Reflection is an active state of a highly qualified teacher. Quite simply, it is what is needed to be effective. “Reflection is a key component of teacher inquiry” (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 22); although, the authors note a critical difference between a teacher’s daily reflection and that of an educator-researcher is intentionality.

The researcher’s reflection throughout the stages of action research was planned and intentional. From the onset of the journey, reflection was apparent in the discovery of a particular problem and it continued as the researcher sifted and read through voluminous amounts of literature related to the PoP. The researcher persisted to reflect during data collection as she revised and added additional questions to the interviews. Throughout data analysis, the researcher considered the inquiry as a whole, reflected upon the data, what it revealed, what was ultimately learned, and the implications for the New Teacher Induction Program. Writing, whether field notes, thoughts, or the formal
writing of each chapter of the present action research study required reflection in order to
better clarify and summarize the researcher’s thoughts.

**Researcher**

**Ethical Considerations**

The primary responsibility of the educator-researcher was to adhere to ethical
standards in which the rights of all participants were respected (Mertler, 2014). The
researcher participated in the National Institutes of Health’s online training module titled,
Protecting Human Research Participants for education on ethical issues. Dana and
Yendol-Hoppey (2014) heed a warning of attention to district policies while pursuing
teacher inquiry; therefore, the researcher requested approval by the Assistant
Superintendent to Learning to conduct the action research. The educator-researcher,
adhered to the University of South Carolina’s (USC) Institutional Review Board’s
requirements, which states, “any research activity involving human subjects conducted by
a member of USC’s faculty or staff or one of its students must be reviewed and approved
by the IRB before it is undertaken” (University of South Carolina, 2010, para. 2).

Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) strongly suggest that educator-researchers
continue to pose self-reflecting questions throughout the research process, one of which
to ensure the “research does not interfere with the academic mission of my role as a
teacher” (p.155). The research comprised of an examination of first-year teachers’
perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTIP, and the action research did not
interfere with the researcher’s teaching or teacher-leader obligations.
Mertler (2014) discusses several other salient ethical issues that may arise throughout the research process. One of those issues is the principle of honesty. The researcher was bound to collect and report data that was true and accurate while ensuring that it was kept secure and confidential. In regards to the principle of beneficence, Mertler reminds the researcher that as educator-researchers collect data and acquire knowledge, they need to be sure it is conducted with an intent to benefit a person or a group of people. Lastly, Mertler discusses the principal of importance. The basis of the research was to examine the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program in EGSD. The implications could be far reaching as its importance could reach dozens of new teachers across the district. Additionally, the findings generated necessary changes for the New Teacher Induction Program and may assist the local university’s support of future education graduates.

Insider/outsider

The participant-researcher was a mentor to one of the first-year teachers that participated in the research. She had mentored other teachers prior to the development of the current New Teacher Induction Program. The participant-researcher experienced the mentoring program for the entire 2016-2017 school year. She had weekly meetings with her mentee, conducted observations of her mentee, and fulfilled all the mentor obligations stated in the handbook (see Appendix B). As an outsider, the participant-researcher was a member of the New Teacher Induction Program design team. She participated in the development of the program, met with some of the first-year teachers, and created a close relationship with two of the research participants. The teacher-researcher had a vested interest in the present action research study, as it allowed her to examine the views of all
the participants, make adjustments to how she mentored her assigned first-year teacher and how she will mentor future teachers, and it permitted her to use the voices and views of the first-year teachers to make necessary changes in the New Teacher Induction Program for future first-year teachers.

Reciprocal Reflection Process

Following the completion of the online training module and gaining permission from the district and university, the researcher drafted a consent form (see Appendix G) for the participants as a means of protecting the privacy of all stakeholders. The consent form provided a brief description of the research plan, a time frame in which the research will be conducted, an indication that involvement was strictly voluntary, and an offer to provide research results upon request.

In order to protect the privacy of the participants, teachers were assured of anonymity in the surveys and the name of district had been given a pseudonym to safeguard anonymity as well. As questions were considered for surveys and interviews, the researcher reflected on the arrangement of words to ensure an unbiased voice, which hopefully lead to accurate answers over desired answers. Lastly, nonparticipation in the research was an option at the onset as well as throughout the research.

Hubbard and Power (1999) state, educator-researchers must “respect those with whom they work, openly sharing information about their research. While they seek knowledge, they also nurture the well-being of others, both students and professional colleagues” (p.64). In order to maintain positive relationships with colleagues, the researcher continued to inform them throughout the research process.
Participants

Participant Recruitment and Selection

Eastern Georgia School District employs approximately 1,900 teachers ranging from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. Females constituted 83.3% of the workforce while men were 16.7% (see Appendix C). During the 2016-2017 school year, the district employed 58 first-year teachers. Teachers were distributed throughout the thirty-two schools in the district to include elementary, middle, and high schools, ranging from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

While the researcher functioned as a member of the design team of the New Teacher Induction Program, she also worked alongside the Assistant Superintendent of Student Learning, who oversees the New Teacher Induction Program. All first-year teachers were asked to complete a survey (see Appendix A) at the end of the 2016-2017 school year. The survey was optional; subsequently, those who responded were the participants in the present action research study.

Overview of Participants

Eighteen first-year teachers responded to the survey sent out in May 2017. Females constitute 61% of the participants while men are 39%. The percentages of each age bracket include: 56% ages 21-25, 0% ages 26-30, 17% ages 31-35, 11% ages 36-40, 17% ages 41-45 and 0% ages 46 and above. Ninety four percent of the participants are white and 6% are black. Of the 18 participants, 0% taught PreK-Kindergarten, 6% taught grades 1-2, 33% taught grades 3-5, 22% taught grades 6-8, and 39% taught grades 9-12. Eleven percent of the participants received an alternative certification from the Georgia
Teacher Alternative Preparation Program (GaTAPP), while 89% received it from a four-year institution.

**Setting**

The context of the action research study was at the Eastern Georgia School District (EGSD). The school district has thirty-two schools serving 25,532 students in Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade. The average graduation rate is 89.032% and the student-teacher ratio in EGSD is 17:1, whereas the national ratio is 16:1. The student population within the county is 61.6% White, 19.5% African American, 8.8% Hispanic, 5.6% Multiracial, 4.0% Asian, 0.3% Native American, and 0.2% Pacific Islander (see Appendix F). The teacher population is 87.2% White, 8.1% African American, and 4.7% Hispanic/Asian/Other (see Appendix C). Based on the 2016-2017 school year, the school district’s teaching staff had the following years of teaching experience:

- Less than 1 year: 58
- 1-10 years: 636
- 11-20 years: 543
- More than 20 years: 538

**Instrumentation & Materials**

**Survey**

The survey (see Appendix A) was administered electronically through Google Forms and the responses were submitted to the teacher-researcher. The survey consists
of both open-ended questions and closed-response rating scales. Likert-type rating scales were selected to effectively measure teachers’ perceptions of their mentor’s level of helpfulness in the assigned roles and responsibilities outlined in the Mentor Handbook (see Appendix B). Helpfulness is defined as “the property of providing useful assistance” (Vocabulary, n.d.). The levels of helpfulness were ranked on the following scale: 5 = Extremely helpful, 4 = Very helpful, 3 = Somewhat helpful, 2 = Not very helpful, 1 = Not helpful at all. The open-ended questions on the survey provided the initial set of qualitative data, which in turn provided the prompting of additional questions for the semi-structured interviews. Members of the NTI team were consulted to safeguard the instrument was unbiased. The survey was field tested with second-year teachers prior and necessary adjustments were made.

**Semi-structured Interviews**

The semi-structured interviews (see Appendix H) were designed to provide a rich description of specific experiences of two first-year teachers and in-depth understanding of their perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program. Several of the questions were formed based on the open-ended questions on the survey. Other questions were formed to further investigate vague responses or to help reveal existing problems with the NTI Program. Interviews were conducted and audio taped privately in the school conference room. The first interview was conducted during the teacher-researchers planning period and lasted thirty-three minutes. Susie was excited to share her experiences between her and her mentor. The second interview was conducted after school on a Friday and lasted forty-seven minutes. Janae was willing to share her
experiences, but cried when she revealed some hurtful moments between her and her mentor.

**Interview transcription process.** The first interview was transcribed the evening of the interview. The researcher reviewed the transcription numerous times and the participant member checked the transcription the following day. No changes were needed, per the participant. The second interview was transcribed the day after the interview and reviewed numerous times to ensure accuracy. Member checking was performed two days following the transcription. The participant confirmed the transcription was accurate and truthful.

**Data Collection**

Electronic surveys were selected as the primary means of collecting first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program because it allowed the researcher to gather a variety of data from many first-year teachers throughout the district relatively quickly and inexpensively. The data collected from semi-structured interviews permitted the researcher to document the views and voices of two participants who had a close working relationship with the researcher.

**Data Analysis & Reflection**

**Discrepant Case**

In June 2017, shortly after the surveys were collected, the researcher met with the Assistant Superintendent of Learning, Mrs. Whitman, who also oversees the New Teacher Induction Program to share the results. One outlier comment by John stated,
“Administrators asking me to break the code of ethics when assigning grades.” concerned Mrs. Whitman and she stated she would address the matter to all principals at the next Principals’ Meeting in July.

Coding Procedure

The teacher-researcher began the coding process by reading through both interviews and making notes of any first impressions, followed by several re-readings and highlighting and labeling certain words, phrases, and ideas aiming for some patterns. As Mertler (2014) suggests, “the categories need to be reflected upon (once again) and described in terms of their connection to or ability to answer the research questions” (p. 165). The teacher-researcher reread the data and the initial categories, examined the research question, and reviewed the areas on which the mentoring component of the NTI Program was focused. She was then able to go back into the interview transcripts and code the passages. The following codes were used in the inductive analysis: (a) SK: skills and performance, (b) TM: teacher morale, communication, and collegiality, (c) PROF: professionalism and positive attitude, (d) ISOL: isolation, and (e) SR: self-reflection.

As the teacher-researcher re-read each interview several times, she labeled relevant pieces of information, such as things that were repeated, surprising, similar to related research, or thought to be relevant. During the third re-read, the teacher-researcher began to notice some pieces of information that had some similarities, so she began to group those items together under needs and neglect.
Reflection with Participants

Data reflection with first-year teachers was ongoing throughout the present action research study. Several first-year teachers were members of the NTI team allowing their voices to be heard from the onset of the 2017-2018 school year. In May, following the surveys, initial results were shared with the teacher-participants and Mrs. Whitman, the NTI Program coordinator allowing a time of reflection on the findings. As a result of the reflection with participants, additional questions were generated for the semi-structured interviews, which would allow the teacher-researcher to more closely examine two specific teachers with bipolar experiences. At the conclusion of the interviews, the teacher-researcher shared the disparity in experiences with the participants to reflect on the possible reasons and to develop an action plan to improve the current mentoring component of the NTI Program.

Conclusion

The present action research study examined the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program in Eastern Georgia School District in the 2017-2018 school year. This study utilize an explanatory mixed-methods research design to sufficiently answer the following research question: *What are first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program in the Eastern Georgia School District?*

This chapter outlined the description of the action research paradigm, the role of the researcher, the recruitment and selection of participants, a rich description of the setting, and the various components of the research design. The intent of the present
action research was to formulate an action plan for the NTIP design team to implement thereby improving the mentoring component of the NTI Program. Additionally, the data has the capacity to inform those who oversee the induction of first-year teachers in EGSD. It was the hope of the researcher that the present action research design postulated a stronger understanding of the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the current NTI Program. The following chapters present the results of the research findings, describe the interpretations of the results, limitations of the action research study, implications of the findings, as well as a reflection of what actions the NTI team implemented.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS & INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Chapter Four presents the findings of the present action research study conducted at Eastern Georgia School District to determine first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program. EGSD lacked a comprehensive induction program. The participant-researcher, who has a decade of mentoring experience, worked with a team of educators and district administrators at EGSD to develop the NTI Program to assist first-year teachers transition into their professional careers vis-à-vis a mentoring program that teamed a veteran teacher with a novice. Permission to conduct this study was granted to the teacher-researcher by EGSD’s IRB and the University of South Carolina’s IRB. Data was collected and analyzed to answer the following research question: *What are first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program in the Eastern Georgia School District?*

Data collection consisted of a teacher-participant survey (see Appendix A) that was sent to all first-year teachers in the EGSD in May 2017. The responses were collected from 18 participants. The teachers’ perceptions were analyzed using descriptive statistics, “simple mathematical procedures that serve to simplify, summarize, and organize relatively large amounts of numerical data” (Mertler, 2014, p. 169). Following the survey, two of the participants were selected for semi-structured interviews based on
their close working relationship with the teacher-researcher and their bipolar experiences. Their responses were analyzed using inductive analysis.

Chapter Four presents the interpretation of the findings that were performed in reciprocity with these 18 first-year teachers in the EGSD. Following California’s New Teacher Center (New Teacher Center, 2016), “a successful induction program regularly self-assesses to discover what is effective and what needs improvement” (p. 1). Based on the present action research study, an action plan, which is outlined in Chapter Five, will take place beginning July 2018 to make improvements for the NTI Program for future first-year teachers.

**Problem of Practice**

Attrition is defined in Georgia as the number of “public school teachers [who] leave education within the first five years of employment” (Owens, 2015, p. 2). According to the district’s Director of Human Resources, the teacher attrition rate continues to be problematic (B. Wilson, personal communication, April 18, 2016). Exit surveys of EGSD teachers who left their teaching positions prior to retirement revealed job dissatisfaction, lack of support from administration, and isolated work conditions. Global research documents the necessity of mentoring new teachers in the induction phase (first three years of teaching) to increase the likelihood of attrition (Kent, Green, Feldman, 2012). Therefore, EGSD created a comprehensive mentoring program in October 2015 to assist first-year teachers with the transition to their new careers and increase job satisfaction. To improve the evaluation method, EGSD will survey its first-
year teachers annually to ensure the mentoring component remains an effective tool to assist first-year teachers transition to their new careers.

**Purpose Statement**

The primary purpose of the present action research study is to describe 18 first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program at the completion of the 2016-2017 school year. Surveys were sent in May 2017 to gather data from the novice teachers in order to improve the mentoring component of the NTI Program. The novice teachers’ voices are important to the District that is desirous of creating a ‘family-like’ culture amongst the school personnel and community. In order to create this culture, the District is focused on ways to not only recruit the best and brightest, but also retain them, as stated in the Human Resource mission statement (see Appendix E).

Following Wong, Breaux, and Klar, (2003), the purpose of the action research is to improve the NTI Program so a family-like culture amongst teachers, school personnel, and administrators can be created and sustained. They write, mentoring “must be a component of a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained induction process” (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 5) where new teachers are immersed in the district’s culture and quickly become a part of the school’s family.

**Research Question**

*What are the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program in Eastern Georgia School District?*
Data Collection Strategy

The NTI team, which in part included the teacher-researcher, several first-year teachers, principals, and district administrators developed a comprehensive induction program, which outlined the specific roles and responsibilities of the mentors, as summarized in Chapter One. Principals were charged with linking each first-year teacher with a mentor, who fits the criteria outlined in Chapter One, for the 2016-2017 school year. At the completion of the 2016-2017 school year, the teacher-researcher surveyed 18 first-year teachers in EGSD after experiencing the NTI Program. The survey was administered electronically through Google Forms and the responses were submitted to the teacher-researcher. Of the 18 first-year teachers; seven are elementary-level, four are middle-level, and seven are high school level.

After analyzing the quantitative data, the teacher-researcher conducted semi-structured interviews (see Appendix G) with two of the teacher-participants with whom she had established a close professional relationship and whose experiences with ‘helpful mentors’ in the NTI Program were vastly different.

Ongoing Analysis & Reflection

Early analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the teacher-participants revealed over 60% of the participants believed the mentoring component of the NTI Program was ‘very helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’. Over 66% of those who shared specific comments about the impact mentoring had on their decision to remain in the teaching profession were positive, which correlates with Ingersoll and Strong’s (2011) findings that mentoring programs are “investments that enhance the effectiveness
of new teachers, can add to the attractiveness of the job, improve teacher retention and improve other outcomes” (p. 206). Seventy-five percent of the teacher-participants expressed their mentoring experience was a success in terms of helpfulness, which links back to Noddings (2010a) when one cares, his/her “motive energy begins to flow toward the needs and wants of the cared-for” (para. 5) creating a family-like culture.

Semi-structured interviews captured an in-depth understanding of two first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program. Although both teacher-participants had vastly opposing experiences with levels of helpfulness, they both expressed levels of satisfaction from their mentors in the areas of professional growth and emotional support, which is aligned with the present study’s definition of “helpfulness”.

Semi-structured interviews polyangulate (Mertler, 2014) the survey data. In September 2017, the teacher-researcher interviewed two of the teacher-participants. The first interview was conducted during the teacher-researchers planning period. It was recorded and lasted thirty-three minutes. The data was transcribed that evening, and a member check was conducted the following day. The second interview was conducted after school on a Friday. It was also recorded and lasted forty-seven minutes. The data was transcribed on Saturday and a member check was conducted the following Monday. Because the two interviewees had a close working relationship with the teacher-researcher, the element of trust had been established and both were assured anonymity, which allowed them to speak openly and honestly. The interviews allowed the teacher-participants’ voices to be heard during the NTI Program’s meeting in October 2017 as outlined in Chapter Five.
Participant-Researcher Assumptions

The teacher-participant had one preconceived notion prior to the data collection of the present action research study. She believed the mentoring component of the NTI Program would be a positive experience for all novice teachers because the new NTI Program had more accountability of mentors’ helpfulness to the novices built in to the assigned roles and responsibilities (see Appendix B). The teacher-participant also knew all new teachers would be linked with a qualified mentor for the 2016-2017 academic year (unlike previous years); therefore, she assumed the NTI Program would be a positive experience. As a participant-researcher, she was aware of specific struggles that her first-year teacher encountered with the NTI Program, to include the first-year teacher’s frustration with the lack of time granted for needed observations of other master teachers.

Insider/Outsider

A detailed description of the theory that frames this DiP can be found in Chapter Two. Noddings’s (1984) model of caring and relationship-building frames the present DiP and the data collected is filtered through Noddings’s lens. The goal is to create reciprocity between the “one-caring” and “the one-cared for” to create a “family-like” culture in the GA District through a “helpful” and mandated mentoring program for ALL novice teachers. The present study explores the insider-outsider status of the participant-researcher as she follows Noddings who wrote:

I received the other into myself, and I see and feel with the other, I become a duality. I am not thus caused to see or to feel--that is, to exhibit certain behavioral signs interpreted as seeing and feeling--for I am committed to the receptivity that
permits me to see and to feel in this way. The seeing and feeling are mine, but only partly and temporarily mine, as on loan to me. (Noddings, 1984, p. 30).

As a mentor, the teacher-researcher was committed to the receptivity of her first-year teacher’s needs, feelings, frustrations, and joys. If the novice teachers do not perceive the mentor to be caring and there is not reciprocity between the two people, then “helpfulness” cannot be established and thus the one-cared for is at odds with the mandated NTI Program’s relationship that is built into the District. It was clear that contrasting experiences occurred for some, for example, Susie perceived her mentor to be “somewhat of a therapist” while Janae felt “it was really hard to approach [her] mentor”.

**Reflective Stance**

As the teacher-researcher reflected on the analysis and interpretation of the results, several questions arose, which include: How well did the process work? What other problems need to be researched in the future? Did the collected data allow the teacher-researcher to thoroughly answer the research question? What additional types of data should have been collected or eliminated? In May 2017, the teacher-researcher sent out 57 requests for surveys to be completed, but only 18 teachers responded.

The teacher-researcher initially shared the data analysis with the NTI Program committee chairperson, Mrs. Whitman in September 2017 and discussed the semi-structured interview questions. Mrs. Whitman is the Assistant Superintendent of Student Learning and she organized the NTI team and was also the person who approved the research to be conducted in the District. Although she did not analyze the data, she reflected on the findings and suggested adding an additional question for the interviews
to better clarify one of the responses concerning the helpfulness of the mentor’s observation of her first-year teacher during a lesson. The observations are one of the required roles of the mentor as described in Chapter One. Mrs. Whitman expressed her discouragement by the low number of participants in the action research study and thought she and the teacher-researcher should suggest to the committee to make future surveys of first-year teachers an additional assignment for them. Results were also shared with the 2017-2018 mentors during their annual training in September 2017 by Mrs. Whitman.

In October 2017, the NTI team met and reflected on the results of the data from the surveys and the interviews and concurred with the Mrs. Whitman’s suggestion to make future surveys an annual assignment (see Appendix D). The following questions also surfaced in the October meeting: (a) What are the mentors’ perceptions of the NTI Program?; (b) What additional training can we provide for our mentors? and (c) How can we create a family-like culture within our schools that invites all teachers to participate in the transition of first-year teachers into their new careers?

**Data Analysis**

Overall, the first-year teachers’ perceptions revealed the mentoring component of the NTI Program to be ‘very helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’ in terms of assisting the first-year teachers in all assigned roles and responsibilities as outlined in Chapter One. Noddings’s (1984) ethic of care is used to frame the relationship between a mentor and first-year teacher. The caring mentor “strives first to establish and maintain caring
relations, and these relations exhibit an integrity that provides a foundation for everything” (Noddings, 2010a, para. 9) mentor and first-year teacher do together.

**Quantitative Data**

**Survey data.** In May 2017, the teacher-researcher sent out surveys (see Appendix A) to 57 first-year teachers in the EGSD to better understand their perceptions of their mentors’ levels of ‘helpfulness’. Helpfulness is defined as “the property of providing useful assistance” (Vocabulary, n.d.). To maintain trust with the participants, the survey responses were submitted anonymously and 18 first-year teachers participated. At the end of the two-week window, the teacher-researcher collected the responses and began to sort through the quantitative data. Questions #12-24 utilized Likert-type scales; therefore, the teacher-researcher weighted the responses as: Extremely helpful (5), Very helpful (4), Somewhat helpful (3), Not very helpful (2), and Not helpful at all (1). The mean, mode, and standard deviation of the participants’ responses were calculated using Excel software and are shown below in Table 4.1 below. All responses with a mean score of less than 3.75 were further analyzed and used to create additional questions for semi-structured interviews.

Table 4.1

First-Year Teachers’ Perceptions of Mentor’s Levels of Helpfulness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>Description of Question</th>
<th>Mean *</th>
<th>Mode *</th>
<th>SD *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Helpfulness to your success</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Assessing and monitoring student growth</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Managing non-instructional tasks</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Managing challenging behavior</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Encouragement during minor failures</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Observing others</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Being observed</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Lesson plans</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Assisting with differentiation</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Providing emotional support</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Positive learning environment</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Effective communication with others</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Reducing stress</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N=18

* Based on the following scale: 5 = Extremely helpful, 4 = Very helpful, 3 = Somewhat helpful, 2 = Not very helpful, 1 = Not helpful at all.

**Qualitative Data**

Survey data. The open-ended questions on the survey provided the initial set of qualitative data, which in turn provided the prompting of additional questions for the semi-structured interviews. In the survey, the participants identified names of teachers other than their mentors who had been helpful to them throughout the school year reiterating a family-like culture and coinciding with Noddings beliefs that “what is learned from caring teachers willing to share their knowledge and their pleasure in
learning is often incidental and very powerful precisely because it is given freely” (Noddings, 2010a, para. 16).

The participants also revealed their perceptions of the impact mentoring had on their decision to remain in the profession. Melissa, a 21-25 year old, White female high-school teacher stated, “The lessened stress levels made returning to the profession an easy decision”. Mark, a 21-25 year old White male high-school teacher stated, “She has helped me in all areas of learning how to be a classroom teacher. I don’t feel like I could have been a teacher without her.” Lauren, a 36-40 year old White female middle school teacher shared, “This program is great for new teachers and gave me access to the vast experience of my mentor. Because of the positive experience with my mentor and the experience I gained I’m looking forward to next year.” Others were less positive and/or neutral. Linda, a 21-25 year old, White female high school teacher indicated, “It was like I didn’t have a mentor at all.” Amy, a 36-40 year old White female elementary teacher stated, “It hasn’t impacted my decision.”

Another open-ended question allowed the teacher-participants to expand on how the mentoring experience has been a success and/or a failure. This particular question may help the committee to improve the selection and/or recruitment of better mentors and determine if the method in which mentors are linked to first-year teachers is effective.

**Failures.** Some shared the failures of the experience to include Sheri, a 21-25 year old White female elementary school teacher who stated, “I was not assigned a mentor until several months after I started. It was never made clear to my mentor or to me what exactly she should have been doing to help me.” Amy stated, “My mentoring
experience did not help me adjust to my new teaching position.” Melissa, a 21-25 year old White female high school teacher responded, “It was like I didn’t even have one. So it was a failure in that sense.”

**Successes.** Conversely, many teacher-participants shared their successes. Mandi, a 21-25 year old White female high school teacher stated, “My mentor was very supportive and helpful throughout the school year. She shared all of her lessons and supplies so that I could have ample resources to teach my classes. She was always willing to answer my questions that I had and provided me with helpful feedback after observations.” Carolyn, a 21-25 year old White female elementary teacher shared, “She has supported me emotionally in more ways than I could have imagined. I love being able to talk with her about situations that happen, and I know she is always there for me.” Evan, a 41-45 year old Black male middle school teacher stated, “Mentoring has helped me be more efficient and proficient.” Tim, a 21-25 year old White male middle school teacher indicated, “Being with a mentor was very helpful. I was pleased with who I was placed with as she was an incredible resource of knowledge, practices, and support.” Lauren shared, “My mentoring experience was a success in that it allowed me to grow as a teacher and made my first year easier.” The teacher-researcher analyzed the responses from the open-ended questions searching for key phrases, patterns, and feelings and developed additional questions for the semi-structured interviews.

**Semi-structured interview data.** Susie and Janae, the two first-year teacher-participants who participated in the semi-structured interviews have different experiences with the NTI Program. Susie, a 21-25 year old White female primary grade teacher had a positive experience while Janae, a 40-45 year old White female elementary teacher had a
negative experience. Both women identified names of veteran teachers other than their mentors who had been helpful to them throughout the early days of the 2016-2017 school year. This is aligned with Noddings (2010a) who believes, the “caring relation is essential as a starting point and a continuous framework of support” (para. 13). The two novice teacher-participants also revealed their perceptions of the impact mentoring had on their decision to remain in the profession for a second year.

Susie stated, “The lessened stress levels made returning to the profession an easy decision”. She said that [the mentor] has “helped me in all areas of learning how to be a classroom teacher. I don’t feel like I could have been a teacher without her.” Susie also shared, “This [NTI] program is great for new teachers and [it] gave me access to the vast experiences of my mentor. Because of the positive first year experience with my mentor and the experience I gained, I’m looking forward to next year.” On the other hand, Janae indicated, “It was like I didn’t have a mentor at all” but “it hasn’t impacted my decision [to stay next year].” Despite their bipolar experiences, both teachers plan to return next year; although, Susie expressed excitement at the thought of her second year but Janae was more neutral. Although it doesn’t reveal anything definitive, one may wonder if Janae’s rough beginning will impact her second and third year.

Semi-structured interviews provided the additional data needed to polyangulate the quantitative and qualitative data postulated through the surveys. To ensure a continuum of trust with the participants, the teacher-researcher shared the results of the surveys with the participants. She then asked two teachers whom she has positive working relationships with and whose mentoring experiences were bipolar to participate.
in a semi-structured interview. Both participants were assured their responses would be kept anonymous, but would also become the voice of the first-year teachers.

**Susie’s interview.** The first interview was with a 24-year old, White, female elementary teacher who earned her degree at the University of Georgia and whose overall experience with Vivienne, her mentor, was positive. She shared that Vivienne was her “go-to person”, a “therapist” at times, and someone who listened. Susie also stated that Vivienne helped her in her professional growth by providing quality feedback after observing her teach a lesson, shared resources such as lesson plans, and assisted with Susie’s classroom management issues. For example, Susie shared, “I had such strong collaborative planning [with my mentor]” and “my lesson planning was so easy” with my mentor, which “took the pressure off of me”.

**Janae’s interview.** Janae is a 45-year old, White, female Special Education teacher who earned her degree from Georgia Southern. Her overall experience with her mentor, Jenna was negative. Jenna was helpful at times, but unapproachable many other times. Janae stated that Jenna neglected her for the first few weeks of the school year, and that she felt Jenna created a hostile work environment and only listened to her concerns when she felt like it. Some examples include: “I did not want to share a lot of information with my mentor because I felt a little bit of hostility”, “When I told her one of her student was chewing a pencil eraser or eraser top, it was met with hostility”, and “The listening was there if it was something she wanted to listen to, but when I really needed some basic help, it might have been me, but I was kind of afraid to approach her”. Janae did communicate that Jenna was “very knowledgeable” in the field of special
education, and that she “is highly trained in all of the disabilities” but her feelings of neglect and isolation resulted in a negative experience.

**Qualitative data analysis.** Susie and Janae were assigned their mentors, but had extremely different experiences. Noddings’s (1984) term, engrossment allows the caring-one to feel with the cared-for. She states, “I receive the other into myself and I see and feel with the other. I become a duality” (Noddings, 1984, p. 30). As we consider the experiences of Janae and Susie, one can assume that Susie’s relationship with her mentor affirms this encounter called engrossment, whereas Janae’s relationship lacked the receptivity, the act of fully receiving the other (Goldstein, 2002).

**Quantitative data analysis.** Overall, the first-year teachers’ perceptions revealed the mentoring component of the NTI Program to be ‘somewhat helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’ in terms of assisting the first-year teachers with mean scores ranging from 3.66 to 4.33. Questions #12-24 had 60-82% of the teacher-participants score either ‘very helpful’ or ‘extremely helpful’. In the survey data, two themes emerged: 1) professional support and 2) emotional support. The sub-themes include general assistance with lesson planning, classroom management, professional growth, effective communication, and stress reduction. According to the literature, professional growth and emotional support are vital components in the retention of new teachers. Feiman-Nemser (2012) believes it is imperative to create opportunities for beginning teachers to learn throughout their careers. Wong, Breaux, and Klar (2003) reiterate that teachers desire to be part of a team and a culture; therefore, schools and districts must focus on creating learning communities.
Coding

The present action research study examined 18 first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program in EGSD. After interviewing two of the teacher-participants, Susie and Janae, the teacher-researcher transcribed the interviews and shared the transcripts with the interviewees to member check the data to ensure the data sources accurately represented them and their ideas (Mertler, 2014). The teacher-researcher met with Susie and Janae separately and both confirmed the transcriptions were accurate and neither had additions or deletions. Following member checking, an inductive analysis was initiated. The teacher-researcher began the coding process by reading through both interviews and making notes of any first impressions, followed by several re-readings and highlighting and labeling certain words, phrases, and ideas aiming for some patterns. As Mertler (2014) suggests, “the categories need to be reflected upon (once again) and described in terms of their connection to or ability to answer the research questions” (p. 165). The teacher-researcher reread the data and the initial categories, examined the research question, and reviewed the areas in which the mentoring component of the NTI Program was focused upon. She was then able to go back into the interview transcripts and code the passages.

First Impressions

The following were noted after the initial reading of the transcripts: a) Susie had a seemingly positive overall experience and Janae’s was the complete opposite, b) Susie and Janae both had a go-to person, c) Susie noted a reduced stress level while Janae noted an increase in her stress level, d) WHO is selected as a mentor is critical, e) Susie and
Janae both noted they needed someone who would listen, f) both participants had opposing experiences with lesson planning, Susie’s was positive and Janae’s was negative g) Susie and Janae both needed help from their mentor; Janae had to seek that help from another teacher, and h) Susie said she had the ideal mentor and Janae did not believe there was such a thing.

Re-readings

As the teacher-researcher re-read each interview several times, she labeled relevant pieces of information, such as things that were repeated, surprising, similar to related research, or thought to be relevant. During the third re-read, the teacher-researcher began to notice some pieces of information that had some similarities, so she began to group those items together under needs. The following codes were used in the inductive analysis: a) SK: skills and performance, b) PROF: professionalism, and c) TM: teacher morale and collegiality.

Needs. Birkeland and Feiman-Nemser (2012) believe, many American schools “treat novice teachers as experts from the first day on the job, maintain norms of autonomy and isolation that limit new teachers’ access to colleagues’ expertise and organize teachers’ work so that opportunities for ongoing professional learning are rare” (p. 111). But research documents the many needs of first-year teachers. Several needs were noted in the interviews and were coded under skills and performance, professionalism, and teacher morale and collegiality.

**Skills and performance.** Several phrases from the interviews were coded as skills and performance, which include: a) knowledgeable mentor who has wisdom and
experience, b) allowed to take baby steps, c) opportunities to watch others, and d) need for guidance. According to Feiman-Nemser (2001), for first-year teachers “induction brings a shift in role orientation and an epistemological move from knowing about teaching through formal study to knowing how to teach by confronting the day-to-day challenges” (p. 1027). Therefore, assistance must be afforded to novice teacher and may include peer observations and reflection (McNally, 2014; Moir & Stobbe, 1995).

**Professionals.** Other phrases, coded as professionalism include: a) help with planning, b) help with classroom management, c) collaboration, d) meaningful feedback from observations, e) not given feedback from observations, f) belittling comments, and g) not listened to when needing to share problems and concerns. School cultures that “stress mutual responsibility and collaboration are cultures in which new teachers can ask questions and seek support” (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 115).

**Teacher morale.** The last several needs were coded under teacher morale, to include: a) a go-to person, b) stress levels reduced, c) validation of feelings, d) hostile environment, e) unapproachable mentor, f) fearful of discussing problems with mentor, g) feelings from mentor that she didn’t have the time to meet, and h) an uncaring attitude. “The early years of teaching are undeniably a time of intense learning, and they are often a time of intense loneliness (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 10). First-year teachers thirst for a culture that acknowledges, respects and nurtures them as professionals” (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 14).
Connection to the Research Question

The teacher-researcher continued to reflect on the research question and how it related to the literature in Chapter Two as she analyzed the data. She also reflected on major areas of focus of the mentoring component of the NTI Program: a) improving beginning teachers’ skills and performance, b) supporting teacher morale, communications, and collegiality, c) building a sense of professionalism, positive attitude, d) facilitating a seamless transition into the first year of teaching, e) putting theory into practice, f) preventing teacher isolation, and g) building self-reflection. The first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring program revealed needs for professional growth, emotional support, and feelings of inclusion and acceptance. Their perceptions corresponded with the literature presented in Chapter Two. Scott (2001) notes, often times novice teachers’ experiences at the onset of the year are overwhelming; therefore, most first-year teachers appreciate the emotional support provided to them during this critical time. According to Wong, Breaux, and Klar (2003), new teachers desire to part of a team, part of a culture; therefore, “the focus of induction is on creating a learning community” (p. 5).

Data Interpretation

The present action research study examined first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program. Eighteen teacher-participants completed a survey at the end of the 2016-2017 school year. After the completion of the surveys, data revealed the mentoring component of the NTI Program to be ‘somewhat helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’ in terms of assisting the first-year teachers in their assigned roles and
responsibilities as outlined in Chapter One. Essentially, the mentor should assist with attaining resources, acclimate first-year teacher to school and staff, observe him/her teaching and provide opportunities to observe others, provide support with lesson planning and refining teaching strategies, identify needs of students, and provide professional and personal support throughout the academic year.

Two participants were then selected based on their bipolar opinions of the mentoring program and participated in semi-structured interviews with the participant-researcher regarding their perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program. The patterns both negative and positive are interwoven and reflect an overarching theme: the need for intentional and ethical caring.

Quantitative Data

Teacher-participants. The survey was sent to 57 first-year teachers and 18 teachers responded for an overall rate of 31.6%. The teacher-participants were 61.1% females and 38.9% males. According to the most recent annual report, Eastern Georgia School District employed 1,880 teachers; 83.2% of the workforce were females and 16.8% were males (see Appendix C). Data depicting the demographics of the teacher-participants are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2
Demographics of Teacher-Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assigned mentors. The NTI Program requires each first-year teacher be linked with a mentor. The mentor is limited to the assignment of one first-year teacher. Mentors are required to meet with their first-year teacher on a weekly basis as outlined in the New Teacher Handbook (see Appendix B). Prior to the NTI Program, the district relied on each principal to link first-year teachers a mentor; unfortunately, many neglected to follow through. Because a linked mentor is a requirement of the NTI Program, one survey question was asked whether he/she had a mentor to ensure this prerequisite was met. Overall, 100% of first-year teachers were linked with a mentor, 50% of the mentors taught on the same grade level, and 50% taught the same subject. Data depicting the aforementioned criteria are shown in Table 4.3.

### Table 4.3: Age, Ethnicity, and Grade Level of Assigned First-Year Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PreK-K</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 (Primary)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 (Elementary)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8 (Middle)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12 (High)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N=18
Table 4.3
Assigned Mentors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>Description of Question</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Assignment of a mentor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mentor on your grade level</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Teaches in your subject area</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Number of weekly hours met</td>
<td>0-2 hours</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3-5 hours</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 hours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10+ hours</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Another helpful teacher</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N=18

According to Wong (2004), mentors are ‘perhaps the most important component of an induction program, but they must be part of an induction process aligned to the district’s vision, mission, and structure” (p. 42). The NTI Program guidelines encouraged principals to coordinate mentors from similar grade levels and/or subject areas whenever possible as the district’s goal is to create a family-like culture. Some of the necessary qualifications for mentors are teacher leaders who understand long-term goals, and are willing to commit additional time interacting with those teachers (Kent, Green, &
Feldman, 2012). As noted in Table 4.3, mentors met up to ten hours weekly with the assigned first-year teacher, with the vast majority meeting five hours or less.

**First-Year Teachers’ Perceptions of Mentoring Component.** Survey items #12-24 addressed the first-year teachers’ perceptions regarding the helpfulness of the mentors during the 2016-2017 school year. Twelve of these items, 13-24 were associated with the specific responsibilities the mentors should have performed throughout the course of the school year. Question 12 was added by the teacher-researcher to reflect the first-year teachers’ overall perceptions of the mentoring experience in relation to their success as a new teacher.

The data for items 12-24 were gathered on a Likert-type scale and grouped with responses of 5 = extremely helpful, 4 = very helpful, 3 = somewhat helpful, 2 = not very helpful, and 1 = not helpful at all. The data revealed overwhelmingly positive responses, which indicated the mentoring component of the NTI Program is perceived to be ‘very helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’ to first-year teachers. Data depicting the responses are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

First-Year Teachers’ Perceptions of Mentoring Component

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>Description of Question</th>
<th>Mean *</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Helpfulness to your success</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Assessing and monitoring student growth</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Managing non-instructional tasks</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Managing challenging behavior</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Encouragement during minor failures</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Observing others</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Being observed</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Lesson plans</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Assisting with differentiation</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Providing emotional support</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Positive learning environment</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Effective communication with others</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Reducing stress</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N=18

* Based on the following scale: 5 = Extremely helpful, 4 = Very helpful, 3 = Somewhat helpful, 2 = Not very helpful, 1 = Not helpful at all.

**Qualitative Data**

An inductive analysis of the semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions on the survey revealed three patterns: a) professional growth, b) emotional support, and c) feelings of isolation. Each pattern represents a significant issue regarding the experiences between mentors and first-year teachers. Collectively, these patterns reveal an overarching theme: the need for intentional and ethical caring.
**Professional growth.** The teacher-participants conveyed gratitude for helping become more efficient and proficient, access to the vast experiences of the mentor, the sharing of lessons and supplies, and meaningful feedback through observations.

**Advice.** Susie responded, “advice was exactly what I needed as a first year teacher.” Janae stated, “what I enjoyed the most was having that person who knew the business, who knew the paperwork, who knew the industry, and had that wisdom and experience to share with me.”

**Sharing.** Mandi shared, “She [her mentor] shared all of her lessons and supplies so that I could have ample resources to teach my classes.” Many teacher-participants appreciated those mentors that were willing to share lesson plans and effective classroom management skills. Susie was overjoyed stating, “my lesson plans were given to me, which I think was so wonderful because all I had to do was understand what the lesson plans were saying and then implement them. It cut down probably 50% of the workload of a teacher.” Susie and Janae shared they were both simply in survival mode many times throughout the year. Janae was asked how her year would have been different had she not had a mentor. She responded, “I don’t think I would’ve made it my first year”. Susie responded, “I would have felt SO lost and unsupported”. Eisner (2013) believes many teachers are in survival mode and simply do what they must to get by as opposed to collaborating and growing in their field in order to improve each year.

**Observations.** Susie stated, “the biggest thing that has helped me is being able to watch teachers teach.” Additionally, Mandi shared, “[my mentor] provided me with helpful feedback after observations.” Susie stated, “my mentor observation was helpful
because it was done the way it was supposed to, which is focusing on one aspect.” On the contrary, her observation done by the Instructional Specialist “didn’t follow the rules, if you will. And to put it bluntly, it was superiorly unhelpful.”

**Emotional support.** The teacher-participants in this study expressed the positive effects from the emotional support provided by the mentors during challenging moments, times of loneliness, and confusing situations.

**Listener.** Carolyn stated, “She has supported me emotionally in more ways than I could have imagined. I love being able to talk with her about situations that happen, and I know she is always there for me.”

**Validation of feelings.** Susie shared her mentor was “somewhat of a therapist” and she appreciated the validation of her emotions when she was having a rough day. When asked specifically about having a memory that triggered the need for the emotional support she quickly replied, “There was a conference that I had. I had a mother that emailed me just blatantly angry with me; I had done something wrong. And I had no clue what to do. I was very hurt. I remember crying to my poor mentor and I was just crying and saying how upset I was that this parent emailed me this and I didn’t do anything wrong. And just having her tell me like that it’s okay, like that happens. You didn’t do anything wrong, you know that. But sometimes parents do this.”

**Helpful.** Tim, a middle school teacher stated, “Being with a mentor was very helpful. I was pleased with who I was placed with as she was an incredible resource of knowledge, practices, and support.” John, an elementary school teacher shared, “She was an awesome help the entire school year!!”
Feelings of isolation. The teacher-participants shared several frustrations: lack of support from the mentor, lack of communication, and unrealistic expectations. Research has shown isolated work conditions to be a major reason teachers leave the profession (Eisner, 2013; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014, July 17; Taranto, 2014; and Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003). Therefore, it is beneficial for school districts to provide comprehensive mentoring programs to assist in the prevention of feelings of isolation.

Lack of support. Unfortunately for several of the teacher-participants their mentors were uncaring, unapproachable, and did not make time to meet with their first-year teacher in times of need. Janae shared her greatest frustration as “not being as prepared as I could have been for (IEP) meetings and talking to people.” She also shared she worked in a “hostile environment” and at times she was fearful to even approach her mentor. Janae also shared, “If I did come to her with something that I needed or wanted, it was not met well”. Janae, stated that her mentor [Jenna] was told she would be mentoring Janae, but not asked. Maybe Jenna was a “bad and uncaring” mentor because she was forced by the principal to be a mentor, or maybe she did not feel prepared, or it was one more duty loaded on to her existing pile of duties. Sheri, an elementary school teacher expressed, “I was not assigned a mentor until several months after I started. At that point I didn’t need very much assistance.” Melissa, a high school teacher responded, “It was like I didn’t even have one.”

Lack of communication. Principals are responsible for selecting and assigning a mentor for his/her first-year teachers. Sheri said months had gone by before she was even made aware of who her mentor was. Sheri also stated when she finally did receive
an assigned mentor, “it was never made clear to my mentor or to me what exactly she should have been doing to help me.”

**Unrealistic expectations.** Janae shared several stories in which her mentor expected her to know more than what she thought a first-year teacher should know. “She [her mentor] didn’t feel like I was intelligent enough.” Janae stated, “I was just told that she had to just lower her standards to work with me”.

**Overarching Theme: The need for intentional and ethical caring**

Each of the previously mentioned patterns can be collectively grouped under one overarching theme: the need for intentional and ethical caring. Noddings’s (1984) model of caring relationships frames the present action research study and the district’s goal to create a family-like culture. “The ethic of care provides a way of thinking about caring that repositions the concept, transforming it from a personality trait to a deliberate and decisive act” (Goldstein, 1998, p. 6). Data collected is filtered through Noddings’s lens. To create a family-like culture through the ‘helpful’ and mandated mentoring program for all first-year teachers, mentors and mentees must create reciprocity between the ‘one-caring’ and the ‘cared-for’. Noddings (1984) writes:

> I received the other into myself, and I see and feel with the other, I become a duality. I am not thus caused to see or to feel--that is, to exhibit certain behavioral signs interpreted as seeing and feeling--for I am committed to the receptivity that permits me to see and to feel in this way. The seeing and feeling are mine, but only partly and temporarily mine, as on loan to me. (p. 30).
It is through this relationship, first-year teachers feel support both emotionally and professionally, and combat feelings of isolation. “Teachers remain with a district when they feel supported by administrators, have strong bonds of connection to colleagues, and are collectively committed to pursuing a common vision for student learning in a performance-oriented culture as they build capacity and community” (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 14). It is evident the teacher-participants had a variety of needs during their first year of teaching and caring relationships provided assistance to many of those needs.

**Answering the Research Question**

The research question established the requisite for a more complete understanding and examination of first-year teachers’ perceptions of the NTI Program. The following research question allowed the teacher-researcher to narrow her focus and collect relevant data: *What are the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program in the Eastern Georgia School District?*

In answering this question, 57 first-year teachers were initially sent a survey (see Appendix A). During the data collection process, 18 teachers completed the survey, responding to open-ended questions, multiple-choice questions, and Likert-type questions. The teacher-researcher began to analyze the data collected from the surveys, followed by the development of questions for the semi-structured interviews. Two of the teacher-participants agreed to participate in the interviews, which were conducted at their schools either during their planning period or after school. Following the semi-structured interviews, the teacher-researcher continued to reflect and analyze data. She generated a
code list from which the characteristics of the phenomena displayed three patterns: a) professional growth, b) emotional support, and c) feelings of isolation. The three patterns led to the identification of one broad theme: the need for intentional and ethical caring.

The results, indicated below, are similar to previous studies mentioned in Chapter Two (Kent, Green & Feldman, 2012; New Teacher Center, 2016; Roff, 2012; Taranto, 2014; and Wilson & Lumadue, 2013).

**Pattern: Professional Growth**

An overwhelming majority (61.1-77.7%) of first-year teachers perceived their mentors to be ‘very helpful’ or ‘extremely helpful’ in the following areas of professional growth: a) effective communication with parents, students, and staff; b) creating a positive learning environment; c) differentiating instruction; d) assisting with lesson plans; e) managing challenging student behavior; f) assisting with time management; and g) assisting with assessing and monitoring student progress.

**Pattern: Emotional Support**

The quantitative data collected from the surveys revealed 77.7% of the teacher-participants perceived their mentors to be ‘very helpful’ or ‘extremely helpful’ in providing them with emotional support and 74.4% stated their mentors were ‘very helpful’ or ‘extremely helpful’ reducing their stress.

**Pattern: Feelings of Isolation**

The qualitative data collected from both the surveys and semi-structured interviews revealed two teacher-participants (16.7%) had feelings of neglect and/or
isolation from their respective mentors. Janae revealed an overall negative perception of
the mentoring component based on feelings of isolation and neglect throughout the year.
Noddings (2002) states, caring relations are imperfect: “either party may lose
attentiveness, respond inappropriately to the other or not respond at all, or find the
response thwarted by circumstances beyond either party’s control” (p. 14).

**Answer to the Research Question**

After the data analysis and interpretation of data, the teacher-researcher was able
to answer the research question: *What are the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the
mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program in Eastern Georgia School
District?*. The first-year teachers’ perceptions of the NTI Program included both positive
and negative experiences, but their collective perceptions’ were overwhelmingly positive.
The majority of first-year teachers’ believe their mentors were ‘very helpful’ to
‘extremely helpful’ in all assigned roles and responsibilities, which correlates with
Goldstein’s (2002) belief that “many teachers are already likely to be active practitioners
of the ‘moral and intellectual relation’ type of caring” (p. 16). The first-year teachers
also perceive some changes are needed to improve the mentoring component of the NTI
Program, which include: more peer observations, additional help with lesson plans, and
to ensure appropriate teachers are being selected as mentors to include the following
characteristics: caring, patient, compassionate, thoughtful, and selfless. Overall, the
majority of first-year teachers’ perceptions revealed the mentoring component to be
‘extremely helpful’.
New Possibilities

Through the process of the present action research study, the teacher-researcher identified several new possibilities for the Eastern Georgia School District’s future learning community of first-year teachers as a means to improve their mentoring experience.

**Lesson plans.** Nearly 40% of the teacher-participants perceived their mentors to have been ‘somewhat helpful’ to ‘not helpful at all’ in the area of lesson planning. One possibility to increase the helpfulness of the mentors is to schedule weekly ‘release time’ for the mentor and the first-year teacher to work on lesson plans collaboratively. Based on Susie’s comments, “taking pressure off”, regarding her collaborative time with her mentor creating lesson plans, the teacher-researcher believes weekly ‘release time’ would greatly benefit the first-year teacher. Collaboratively planning lessons may also improve the overall effectiveness of the NTI Program. According to Watkins (2005), “the principal has to find time away from the mentor’s teaching duties for them to visit and conference with new teachers” (p. 86).

**Selection of mentors.** For the 2016-2017 school year, each principal was asked to assign a veteran teacher to be a mentor to a first-year teacher. In the case of Susie, her mentor has served as one for over a decade and requests to mentor each year. She described her mentor as being “helpful”, a “good listener”, “caring”, and a “therapist”, Janae had a different experience. Her mentor did not request to be a mentor but was given the responsibility by her principal. Janae described her mentor as someone who “did not care”, who was “unapproachable” and “unavailable”, but knowledgeable and
intelligent. The teacher-researcher believes a new possibility for the NTI Program would be a more careful selection of mentors, which correlates with Wong (2004), who believes mentors are “perhaps the most important component of an induction program” (p. 42).

**Mentor training.** In addition to the careful selection of mentors, is the need for comprehensive training for all mentors. LaVine (2016) states, according to the research, “mentors, by and large, had no formal training to gain the skills required to enhance the growth and development of the novice teacher and therefore offered little in achieving an effective relationship with the novice” (p. 295). Because caring is a vital component of mentoring, but not an innate behavior, it “must be learned through reflexive modeling” (Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012, p. 1091). Based on the evidence of lack of support for many first-year teachers, district training for new and veteran mentors may assist mentors in their assigned roles and responsibilities, and the development of ethical caring.

**Conclusion**

The present action research study was intended to examine the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program at the end of their first year of teaching. Surveys were distributed to 57 first-year teachers in May 2017 and 18 teachers responded. Two teacher-participants participated in semi-structured interviews. The surveys and interviews collectively reflected the first-year teachers’ perceptions of their experiences in the EGSD during the 2016-2017 school year.

The first-year teachers in the EGSD perceived the mentoring program to be ‘very helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’; however, the majority of first-year teachers’ perceptions revealed the mentoring component to be ‘extremely helpful’. Three distinct patterns were
identified from the data collected and analyzed during this study, which include: professional growth, emotional support, and feelings of isolation. From the patterns, one broad theme was recognized: the need for intentional and ethical caring.

A summary and discussion of the research is presented in Chapter Five. During the final phase, the teacher-researcher collaborated with the teacher-participants and the NTI team to inform an action plan to improve the mentoring component of the NTI Program for future first-year teachers in the EGSD. The Action Plan will assist first and second-year teachers and mentors. Mentor training will include in part specific training of how to care for the first-year teacher and how to conduct a reflective observation. Principals will also receive information on how to best select a mentor and how to create a “culture of caring” and support within the school.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND ACTION PLAN

Eastern Georgia School District’s exit surveys of teachers who left their positions prior to retirement revealed job dissatisfaction, lack of support from administration, and isolated work conditions; consequently, the teacher attrition rate continues to be problematic in EGSD, according to the Director of Human Resources (A. Wilson, personal communication, April 18, 2016). The Assistant Superintendent of Student Learning believes that teacher retention is necessary in order to ensure student achievement is not affected.

Eastern Georgia School District employed approximately 1,900 teachers ranging from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. Females constituted 83.3% of the workforce while men were 16.7% (see Appendix C). During the 2016-2017 school year, the district employed 58 first-year teachers. Teachers were distributed throughout the 32 schools in the district to include elementary, middle, and high schools, ranging from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

Global research documents the necessity of mentoring new teachers in the induction phase (first three years of teaching) to increase the likelihood of attrition (Kent, Green, Feldman, 2012). Prior to the present action research study, EGSD lacked a comprehensive induction program; therefore, in October 2015, the district began creating an induction program, to include a mentoring component to assist first-year teachers with
the transition to their new careers and increase job satisfaction. The NTI Program was implemented during the 2016-2017 school year.

The teacher-researcher designed a survey (see Appendix A) based on the roles and responsibilities of the mentor as stated in the Mentor Handbook (see Appendix B) and the desired outcomes of the mentoring component of the induction program. The survey was administered in May 2017. Eighteen first-year teachers responded to the survey, followed by semi-structured interviews of two teacher-participants who had bipolar experiences. Data from the survey was analyzed and used to guide the teacher-researcher in the development of the interview questions. Qualitative data from the interviews was used to polyangulate the survey data, and coded to determine patterns and eventually one broad theme. At the conclusion of the data analysis, the teacher-researcher worked with several of the teacher-participants and NTI Program design team to develop an action plan.

The present action research study was primarily designed to examine the first-year teachers’ perception of the mentoring component of the NTI Program in EGSD. Following Wong, Breaux, and Klar (2003), the secondary purpose of the action research was to improve the NTI Program so a family-like culture amongst teachers, school personnel, and administrators can be created and sustained. They write, mentoring “must be a component of a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained induction process” where new teachers are immersed in the district’s culture and quickly become a part of the school’s family (Wong, Breaux, & Klar, 2003, p. 5). Collectively, this study was conducted to assess the value of the newly designed mentoring component of the NTI
Program followed by the development of an action plan to make necessary modifications to the current NTI Program to meet the needs of future novice teachers.

To determine the perceived levels of helpfulness of the mentoring program, one research question guided the research: *What are the first-year teachers’ perception of the mentoring component of the NTI Program in EGSD?* The significance of the research question and findings will impact all first-year teachers and mentors in the district involved in the mentoring process. EGSD also has a vested interest in the results of the present action research study as the county aspires to design and implement an effective induction program that creates a family-like culture, provides needed support, and ultimately retains highly qualified teachers, which in turn will continue to positively affect student achievement.

Findings from the survey revealed over 60% of the teacher-participants believed the mentoring component of the NTI Program was ‘very helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’. Over 66% of those who shared specific comments about the impact mentoring had on their decision to remain in the teaching profession were positive. Seventy-five percent of the teacher-participants expressed their mentoring experience was a success in terms of helpfulness in all areas.

The teacher-researcher believes the findings of the present action research study coincide with Noddings’s (1984) model of caring and relationship building in which the mentor (the one-caring) is committed to the receptivity of the first-year teacher’s (the cared-for) needs, feelings, frustrations, and joys. The semi-structured interviews revealed more specific findings in relation to Noddings’s ethic of care. Janae’s perceptions of her
mentoring experience exposed the results of a mentor who disregarded Janae’s needs, feelings and frustrations. Her mentor’s disregard to her commitment to ‘care’ for her mentee or helping her feel part of a family, led to Janae’s feelings of isolation throughout her first year of teaching. Susie’s contrasting experience mirrored Noddings’s (1984) ideal caring relationship:

I received the other into myself, and I see and feel with the other, I become a duality. I am not thus caused to see or to feel--that is, to exhibit certain behavioral signs interpreted as seeing and feeling--for I am committed to the receptivity that permits me to see and to feel in this way. The seeing and feeling are mine, but only partly and temporarily mine, as on loan to me. (p. 30).

Chapter Five is organized in the following sections: a) key questions, b) action researcher, c) developing an action plan, d) the action plan, e) facilitating educational change, f) summary of research findings, g) suggestions for future research, and h) the conclusion of the present action research study.

**Key Questions**

Several key questions emerged from the findings and implications for the teacher-researcher. As she was analyzing the data, the teacher-researcher began to reflect on her insider position as mentor. The requirements and responsibilities of being a mentor were at times overwhelming in addition to her job as a teacher. The first nine weeks of the school year seemed to be the most demanding in respect to the time given to her first-year teacher. Numerous times throughout the year, the teacher-researcher was drowning in work and even questioned how effective she was as a mentor. From these feelings, the
first key question emerged. Is there a direct correlation in mentor effectiveness and scheduled release time with first-year teacher? According to Goldrick (2016), the Director of Policy at the New Teacher Center, school districts should provide release time for mentors and “dedicated mentor-new teacher contact time” (p. ix).

The second and third questions relate from the perspective of all district mentors. What are the mentors’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program? Is the district’s mentor training effectively assisting mentors meet the emotional and professional needs of new teachers?

Due to the cyclical nature of action research and action plan, two additional questions emerged. How can second-year teachers who experienced the NTI Program be resources for new teachers at EGSD? What future elements of the NTI Program can be strengthened for future implementation? Mertler (2014) reminds us the reflection process is not linear, but rather an active state and a key component throughout teacher inquiry.

**Action Researcher**

**Insider/Outsider**

The teacher-researcher’s status was in constant flux between an insider and outsider throughout the research process. As an insider, the teacher-researcher experienced the mentoring component of the induction program for the 2016-2017 school year as a mentor to one of the first-year teachers during the present action research study. She provided the support needed and required of her as stated in the mentor handbook, held weekly meetings with her mentee, conducted observations of her first-year teacher,
shared resources and lesson plans, and made herself available before school, during her planning period and after school.

As a curriculum leader, the teacher-researcher was one of the initial committee members to help design the NTI Program in the fall of 2015; thereby taking on the role of outsider. She took a lead role by offering to examine the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the New Teacher Induction Program at the end of the first year of its inception. The teacher-researcher developed the survey which was sent out to the 57 first-year teachers in May 2017. She also constructed questions for semi-structured interviews, conducted the interviews, analyzed the results from the surveys and interviews, and continued to inform the NTI Program design team and teacher-participants of the progress. The dual roles of insider/outsider overlapped as the teacher-researcher was able to share the voice of her mentee to the NTI team and conversely, she was able to share some of the thoughts and future actions of the committee with her mentee. The teacher-researcher had a vested interest in the present action research study, as it allowed her to examine the views of all the participants, make adjustments to how she mentored her assigned first-year teacher, and it permitted her to use the voices and views of the first-year teachers to make necessary changes in the NTI Program for future first-year teachers. Hubbard and Power (1999) state, teacher-researchers must “respect those with whom they work, openly sharing information about their research. While they seek knowledge, they also nurture the well-being of others, both students and professional colleagues” (p.64). In order to maintain positive relationships with her mentee, other teacher-participants, and the NTI team, the teacher-researcher continued to inform them throughout the research process.
Personal Challenges

As the teacher-researcher attempted to affect educational change, she encountered several obstacles and hurdles. Because her meetings with the first-year teachers was constrained by time, she had limited opportunities to personally connect on a deep level and build strong levels of trust with all the participants. She also experienced some resistance to change. Several of the committee members exhibited some resistance when the teacher-researcher initially offered to conduct research for the district. The Director of Human Resources was reluctant to share exit survey information and from the teacher-researcher’s perspective, a few administrators seemed disinclined having a first grade teacher pursue this particular leadership position of teacher-researcher. As she continued to work with the team, the teacher-researcher assumed minor leadership roles within the design team to prove she was a capable leader. As the process continued, those members reconciled with the benefits and improvements that may occur as a result of the teacher-researcher’s efforts with the present action research study.

Several times throughout the research process, the teacher-researcher experienced reluctance to interfere with others’ professional practice. As the end of the first year of the NTI Program neared, the teacher-researcher prepared to send out surveys to the 57 first-year teachers. Typically, the Director of Human Resources would send out surveys to all new employees in the school district to determine their levels of socialization into their new jobs. The teacher-researcher’s survey (see Appendix A) would provide a more in-depth examination of the first-year teachers’ perceptions than the survey typically used by the Director of Human Resources; therefore, the teacher-researcher was reluctant to interfere with his professional practice.
Because the NTI Program design team consists of a variety of people from within the county, some of which are administrators, the teacher-researcher also struggled to share the research documenting the importance of the principals’ roles in selecting mentors. More specifically, one teacher-participant revealed in her survey that her principal neglected to choose a willing teacher to mentor, possibly causing an unprofessional experience to occur between the mentor and mentee. As a teacher addressing district principals, the teacher-researcher cautiously approached the topic by sharing documented research that shows the important role principals play in making a teacher’s first year successful: the most successful induction programs must “incorporate a strong sense of administrative support” (Wong, 2004, p. 48).

Developing an Action Plan

The reciprocity between the participants and teacher-researcher and the NTI team was instrumental in the development of the action plan. At the onset of the research, the design team solicited several first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component as they walked through the beginning months of their first year. Their voices along with many other first-year teachers were influential as the teacher-researcher collected and analyzed the data from the present action research study.

Through the investigation of the present action research study, several things were learned. Most importantly, EGSD’s induction program has grown tremendously from a checklist of support to a program that offers both emotional and professional support to the district’s first-year teachers. The data also revealed both emotional and professional support are provided in varying degrees. Interviews of Susie and Janae disclosed bipolar
experiences of the mentoring program, which ultimately revealed the importance of
district principals to select the highest quality mentors. Lastly, through the analysis of
data, it was learned that intentional and ethical caring of the district’s first-year teachers
occurs to some but not all.

At the conclusion of the analysis of the present action research study, the teacher-
participants met with the NTI team to assist in the development of the Action Plan that
reflected the first-year teachers’ voices. The participants, now second-year teachers will
continue to assist the NTI Program design team as they move into Phase Two of the
mentoring program and a reciprocal plan to continually add the voices of the first-year
teachers to the NTI Program design team will be an additional focus of the Action Plan.

**The Action Plan**

Induction programs are necessary roles for schools in providing a healthy
environment for first-year teachers to develop the craft of teaching, survive isolated
conditions, and succeed as teachers. The present action research study illuminated
several challenges to the effectiveness of the district’s induction program. Because “a
successful induction program regularly self-assesses to discover what is effective and
what needs improvement” (New Teacher Center, 2016, p. 1), the teacher-researcher in
reciprocity with the first-year teachers and NTI team developed the following Action
Plan to address needs ranging from emotional support and professional support, and
intentional and ethical caring.
Release Time

First-year teachers expressed varying levels of helpfulness provided by their mentors in the areas of emotional and professional support. Although the majority of teacher-participants stated the level of support was ‘very helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’, some participants reported a lack of support or disregard for their specific needs (‘not helpful at all’). In response, the NTI team reiterated the need to encourage principals to allow mentors and new teachers time to reflect, observe, and collaborate to improve instruction in class, build a sense of family, and provide the emotional support needed throughout the year. Mrs. Whitman, the Superintendent of Student Learning will share the results at the principals’ meeting in July 2018. Mrs. Whitman also suggested adding a specific question to the first-year teachers’ survey to monitor adequate release time is given to mentors and new teachers, which will be sent out in December 2018.

Mentors

Teachers also reported the significance of selecting the best mentor. Susie stated in her interview that she believes the NTI team should search for mentors who are “caring, compassionate, thoughtful, helpful, [and] selfless for sure”. According to Wong, Breaux, and Klar (2003), mentors “must be carefully selected and highly trained, have a clear understanding of their purpose, and serve as contributing members of an overall comprehensive induction program” (p. 19). In response to the research and comments made by the first-year teachers, the following changes are included in the Action Plan: a) the job descriptions of the district’s Instructional Specialist (IS) will include being a lead mentor to all mentors in the IS’s respective buildings; b) the mentor applications will
continue to be required, with the addition, of mentors being asked to reapply every two to three years to ensure the quality of the pool remains strong, and c) comprehensive mentor training will be provided by the district.

**Instructional specialists.** The Instructional Specialists will begin their new responsibility as lead mentors in the 2018-2019 school year and will be monitored by Mr. Wilson, Director of Student Learning for Elementary. Their responsibilities will include overseeing all mentors in their respective buildings, scheduling quarterly meetings with mentors, collecting the documented times mentors meet with first-year teachers, and providing mentors with needed resources.

**Mentor applications.** The caring mentor “strives first to establish and maintain caring relations, and these relations exhibit an integrity that provides a foundation for everything” (Noddings, 2010a, p. 9) mentor and first-year teacher do together. Because the application process is critical to the selection of the best mentors, Mrs. Whitman will continue to monitor the application process as well as speak to the principals at the principals’ meeting in July 2018 to address the important part they have in identifying teacher strengths, which include moral and ethical caring, compassionate, thoughtful, helpful, patient, and selfless. Noddings (1984) suggests the following guidelines to assist in the identification of caring teachers:

> The observer…cannot see the crucial motive and may misread the attitudinal signs. The observer, then, must judge caring, in part, by the following: First, the action…either brings about a favorable outcome for the cared-for or seems reasonably likely to do so; second, the one-caring displays a characteristic
variability in her actions – she acts in a nonrule-bound fashion on behalf of the cared-for. (p. 24).

**Mentor training.** Mentoring programs in and of themselves cannot directly ‘care’ for its first-year teachers; therefore, institutions must work to create optimal conditions in which the mentors’ abilities to care for others may flourish (Noddings, 2010b). According to Wong (2004), “for a mentor to be effective, he or she must be trained to the mission and goals of a district” (p. 42). Mrs. Whitman will work on providing comprehensive mentor training, which will include having courageous conversations about classroom management, effective teaching practices, ways to assist new teachers through the different phases of a new year teacher’s first year, and ways to promote collegial collaboration. The NTI team stressed the need to encourage these conversations in Professional Learning Communities so it becomes a culture of improvement for all. The mentor training will consist of whole group training followed by breakout sessions based on years of mentoring experience and/or areas in which mentors need additional training. Mrs. Whitman will create a group to oversee the development of the mentor training, which is scheduled to begin in July 2018.

**Surveys**

**First-year teacher surveys.** Because the teacher-participants’ surveys revealed current levels of helpfulness provided by their mentors to be ‘very helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’, the action plan includes the continuation of surveys of first-year teachers to monitor the perceptions of their mentors’ helpfulness in their assigned responsibilities, to determine if adequate support is being provided, and to inform the NTI team of future
changes. The surveys will be designed by the teacher-researcher, sent out by the Director of Human Resources, collected and analyzed by the teacher-researcher, and presented to the teacher-participants and NTI team. Surveys will be conducted at the end of the first semester, December 2018 and reported in February 2019, and the second survey will be administered in May 2019 and reported in July 2019.

**Mentor surveys.** In response to a key question that arose during the present action research study, the teacher-researcher suggested to the NTI team that the district survey the mentors to examine their perceptions of the NTI Program and the new mentoring training. The teacher-participants and NTI team agreed; therefore, surveys of mentors will be designed by the teacher-participant, reviewed by the team, administered by the Director of Human Resources, collected and analyzed by the teacher-researcher, and presented to the teacher-participants and NTI team at the conclusion of the 2017-2018 school year.

**Second-year teacher surveys.** Many teacher-participants voiced their positive feelings of preparedness for their second year of teaching due to the level of support provided by their mentors during the first year. Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) believes new teachers need three to seven years of experience to become highly effective teachers; therefore, to ensure the new teachers continue to acquire the needed support during year two, the Action Plan consists of a survey of second-year teachers scheduled to be administered in May of 2018 to examine the second-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program. Surveys will be designed by the NTI team, administered by the Director of Human Resources, collected and analyzed by the teacher-researcher, and presented to the teacher-participants and NTI team in July 2018.
**Observations**

The teacher-participants also revealed a desire for more flexibility in their choices of observations. Presently, first-year teachers are required to have a total of four observations, to include; one peer, one collaborative, and one video observation plus one free choice. The participants shared their desire to choose any combination of the four depending on their individual needs; therefore, the NTI team changed the requirements to four observations of any combination. The Mentor Handbook and New Teacher Handbook will be modified by Mrs. Whitman to reflect those changes and be effective August 2018.

**Facilitating Educational Change**

According to Mertler (2014), “the teacher-researcher-through the act of designing and conducting action research studies-becomes the missing link between the theoretical researchers and the practicing educators” (p. 245). However, the act of conducting the research does not facilitate educational change, it is the sharing of the findings that bridges the gap. Communicating the results to others, whether formally or informally, lends credibility to the present action research study and gives the teacher a voice (Mertler, 2014). The goal of the teacher-researcher is to communicate the results to various audiences, which include, Instructional Specialists, new and veteran mentors, and the district’s administration.

In April 2018, the teacher-researcher will apply for an Instructional Specialist position within the county. She hopes to use this platform to communicate her research findings with the district’s Instructional Specialists. The teacher-researcher expects to
face challenges during her attempts to effect educational change, as she will be new to the position. Fortunately, Mr. Wilson, who oversees all Instructional Specialists is also a member of the NTI team and is familiar with the teacher-researcher’s present action research study and findings; therefore, she is confident she will be afforded an opportunity to share the results. If the teacher-researcher remains as a classroom teacher, she plans to offer to attend one of the Instructional Specialist county meetings to communicate the research and findings.

The teacher-researcher will also attempt to incorporate the research findings with new and veteran mentors during the mentor training in August of 2018. Presently, the NTI team is collaborating to develop a comprehensive mentor training program. The teacher-researcher will share the findings from her research as well as the research that frames her study. She also plans to suggest a book study of *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* by Nel Noddings.

Mertler (2014) suggests sharing the results with the district’s administration as the “results of action research can be used as an effective means of enabling your school or district to make educational decisions that are better informed” (p. 247). Because EGSD’s Instructional Specialist positions are a recent addition to the district, and one of their responsibilities is to be lead mentors to the district mentors, the communication of the present action research study findings to the district’s administration could impact their decision to preserve the Instructional Specialist positions and how to best utilize them in the future. As a result of sharing the findings of the present action research study with the Assistant Superintendent of Student Learning, the teacher-researcher has been afforded an opportunity to present at the NTI Summit in Macon, Georgia in May 2018.
She also has plans to present at the Impacting Student Learning Conference at Augusta University in March 2019.

Preparations for these opportunities will include a Power Point presentation, which includes background information, purpose of the study, methodology employed, results, conclusions, and action plan, followed by a time for questions and answers. Depending on the audience, the teacher-researcher will modify the presentation to ensure it is brief and focused and helpful to the audience. If the book study is approved, the teacher-researcher will prepare an outline for the study, design weekly reading assignments, provide discussion points, and create opportunities to share comments, questions, and/or points of view via Google Hangouts.

**Summary of Research Findings**

Comprehensive induction programs are necessary roles for schools in providing a healthy environment for first-year teachers to develop the craft of teaching, survive isolated conditions, assimilate to their new profession, and succeed as teachers. Research has shown the impact comprehensive induction programs have on the retention of quality teachers (Kent, Green, Feldman, 2012), student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), and it empowers them to grow and improve in their profession (Moir, 2015). According to Wong, Breaux, and Klar (2003), effective schools and districts “have an induction program that trains, supports and acculturates new teachers by introducing them to the responsibilities, missions, and beliefs of their schools and districts, insuring their success from their very first day of teaching” (p. 25). A vital component of effective induction programs is mentoring (Haynes, 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Wong, Breaux, & Klar,
To determine the perceived effectiveness of the mentoring component of the NTI Program from the perspective of first-year teachers, the following research question was developed: *What are the first-year teachers’ perception of the mentoring component of the NTI Program in EGSD?*

**Caring**

Overall, the findings from the present action research study revealed over 60% of the participants believed the mentoring component of the NTI Program was ‘very helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’ in terms of assisting the first-year teachers in all assigned roles and responsibilities as outlined in Chapter One. Over 66% of those who shared specific comments about the impact mentoring had on their decision to remain in the teaching profession were positive, which correlates with Ingersoll and Strong’s (2011) findings that mentoring programs are “investments that enhance the effectiveness of new teachers, can add to the attractiveness of the job, improve teacher retention and improve other outcomes” (p. 206). Seventy-five percent of the teacher-participants expressed their mentoring experience was a success in terms of helpfulness, which links back to Noddings’s (2010a) belief, when one cares his/her “motive energy begins to flow toward the needs and wants of the cared-for” (para. 5) creating a family-like culture.

**Professional Growth**

In the study, an overwhelming majority (61.1-77.7%) of first-year teachers perceived their mentors to be ‘very helpful’ or ‘extremely helpful’ in the following areas of professional growth: a) effective communication with parents, students, and staff; b) creating a positive learning environment; c) differentiating instruction; d) assisting with
lesson plans; e) managing challenging student behavior; f) assisting with time management; and g) assisting with assessing and monitoring student progress. In the review of literature, Feiman-Nemser (2001) states, for first-year teachers “induction brings a shift in role orientation and an epistemological move from knowing about teaching through formal study to knowing how to teach by confronting the day-to-day challenges” (p. 1027). It is evident from the findings, the majority of mentors assisted first-year teachers in ways that allowed them to make that professional shift.

**Emotional Support**

The responses found in the quantitative data collected from the surveys revealed 77.7% of the teacher-participants perceived their mentors to be ‘very helpful’ or ‘extremely helpful’ in providing them with emotional support and 74.4% stated their mentors were ‘very helpful’ or ‘extremely helpful’ reducing their stress. The research findings support the literature which states, often times, novice teachers’ experiences at the onset of the year are overwhelming; therefore, most first-year teachers appreciate the emotional support provided to them during this critical time (Scott, 2001).

**Feelings of Isolation**

“The early years of teaching are undeniably a time of intense learning, and they are often a time of intense loneliness (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 10). Findings from the study revealed two teacher-participants (16.7%) had feelings of neglect and/or isolation from their respective mentors. One of the two aforementioned participants revealed an overall negative perception of the mentoring component based on feelings of isolation and neglect throughout the year. Conversely, 83.3% of the teacher-participants did not
experience isolation or feelings of neglect, but acceptance within a family-like culture. According to Wong, Breaux, and Klar (2003), “collegial interchange, not isolation, must become the norm for teachers” (p. 22). The era of teacher isolation must be exchanged for a family-like culture of all teachers, novice and veteran, working together.

**Suggested Changes for Improvement**

First-year teachers also reported the need for change to improve various areas of the mentoring component of the NTI Program. Participants suggested increasing the number of peer observations, providing additional assistance with lesson plans, and ensuring quality teachers are being selected as mentors and who also exhibit the following characteristics: caring, patient, compassionate, thoughtful, and selfless. According to Wong (2004), mentors are “perhaps the most important component of an induction program” (p. 42). Thinking about mentorly caring using Noddings’s ethic of care as a conceptual framework as described in Chapter Two “enables us to understand more fully the intellectual aspects of caring, and allows us to think of caring as a sound foundation” (Goldstein, 2002) for mentoring practices.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Based on the key questions outlined above, the findings from the study, and the action plan the teacher-researcher presents several recommendations for future research. Research documents the important role principals play in making a teacher’s first year successful. Wong (2004) believes the most successful induction programs must “incorporate a strong sense of administrative support” (p. 48). Watkins (2005) states “the principal has to find time away from the mentor’s teaching duties for them to visit and
conference with new teachers” (p. 86). According to Goldrick (2016), the Director of Policy at the New Teacher Center, school districts should provide release time for mentors and “dedicated mentor-new teacher contact time” (p. ix). Based on documented research and the teacher-participants’ voices, the action plan for the present action research study includes encouraging principals to allow mentors and new teachers release time to reflect, observe, and collaborate to improve instruction in class, build a sense of family, and provide the emotional support needed throughout the year. A comparative study could collect data from various schools within the district to examine amount of release time given by administration and the perceived levels of mentor effectiveness through the perspective of first-year teachers. Quality mentoring involves the ability to develop meaningful relationships, which require meeting on a regular basis and having sufficient time to collaborate.

A second recommendation is to replicate a portion of this study with the next year’s group of novice teachers to examine their perceived levels of helpfulness of their mentors after the new mentor training has been in effect. Mentoring programs in and of themselves cannot directly ‘care’ for its first-year teachers; therefore, institutions must work to create optimal conditions in which the mentors’ abilities to care for others may flourish (Noddings, 2010b). According to Wong (2004), “for a mentor to be effective, he or she must be trained to the mission and goals of a district” (p. 42). As a result of the action plan, the district will provide a more comprehensive mentor training, which will include having courageous conversations about classroom management, effective teaching practices, ways to assist new teachers through the different phases of a new year teacher’s first year, and ways to promote collegial collaboration. Similar to the present
action research study, surveys will be utilized to gather quantitative data from all first-year teachers and follow up interviews will be conducted to gather specific and detailed experiences from several participants through semi-structured interviews.

Similar to the aforementioned study is an explanatory mixed-methods research design utilized to examine multiple mentors’ perceptions of the district’s mandated mentor training. Initially, the teacher-researcher will collect quantitative data from all mentors following the completion of the mentor training and the 2018-2019 school year. Shortly thereafter, qualitative data will be collected to elaborate and further explain the quantitative data. Based on the results of this study, the NTI team could make modifications as suggested through the voices of the teacher-participants.

According to Ross, Vescio, Tricarico, and Short (2011), “ensuring support for novice teachers requires selecting mentor teachers who not only have the necessary skills and content knowledge but also have the desire and commitment to work with a novice (p. 10). Support for new teachers must be consistent and persistent. The last recommendation is to conduct a correlation study to examine the different perceived levels of helpfulness compared to the number of hours met with the mentor. According to Mertler (2014), in a correlational study, a teacher-researcher “examines whether and to what degree a statistical relationship exists between two or more variables” (p. 97). The basic design of this study would involve the group of first-year teachers in EGSD who will be measured on the number of contact hours with his/her respective mentor and the first-year teachers’ perceived levels of their mentors’ helpfulness that occurred during the 2016-2017 school year.
Conclusion

Eastern Georgia School District recognized the importance of retaining effective teachers to accelerate student learning as well as the need for a strong induction process to ensure effective teachers remain in the classroom; therefore, the district recently implemented the NTI Program, which was designed to better support its new teachers through a more comprehensive and intentional mentoring program. The mission of the NTI Program is to “help beginning teachers make a successful transition into teaching by providing extensive support through the first three years of teaching” (see Appendix B) and increase job satisfaction. The purpose of the present action research study was to examine the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program in EGSD. Research has shown the impact comprehensive induction programs have on the retention of quality teachers (Kent, Green & Feldman, 2012), student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), and it empowers them to grow and improve in their profession (Moir, 2015).

Surveys from 18 first-year teachers and semi-structured interviews of two teacher-participants with bipolar experiences were conducted following the completion of the 2016-2017 school year. The data used to address the research question created a comprehensive picture of the first-year teachers’ perceptions of the mentoring component of the NTI Program. The overall findings revealed 75% of teacher-participants expressed their mentoring experience was a success in terms of helpfulness. An overwhelming majority perceived their mentors to be ‘very helpful’ to ‘extremely helpful’ in areas of professional growth, emotional support, and acceptance within a family-like culture. Several teacher-participants had negative experiences to include feelings of neglect and
isolation. The voices of the first-year teachers assisted in the development of the 
aforementioned action plan, which includes an increase in the number of peer 
observations, additional assistance with lesson planning, scheduled release time with their 
mentors, and comprehensive mentor training.

Due to the cyclical nature of the study, the teacher-researcher recommended 
future research to examine the effectiveness of the specific changes made through the 
development of the action plan, which include an examination of the mentors’ 
perceptions of the district’s mentor training, a correlation study between the number of 
contact hours between the mentor and mentee in relation to the perceived levels of 
helpfulness, and a comparative study based on release time allocated from administration 
and the perceived levels of helpfulness of the mentors.

The teacher-researcher has future plans to share the findings with various 
audiences within the local community, to include district Instructional Specialists, new 
and veteran mentors and district administration, and she has an opportunity to share at the 
NTI Summit in May 2018. Her desire to facilitate educational change has inspired her to 
pursue an Instructional Specialist job in the summer of 2018, which will allow her greater 
opportunities to lead the district’s mentor training and become a lead mentor to other 
mentors within the district.
REFERENCES


Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Helpfulness (n.d.). *Vocabulary.com*. Retrieved from:

https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/helpfulness


LaVine, M. E. (2016). Mentoring and professional development opportunities as
perceived by novice physical education teachers in the induction year. *Teacher Education and Practice, 29*(2), 293-312.


APPENDIX A

SURVEY

New Teacher Survey

This survey is to be taken by first-year teachers at the end of the first semester.

1. Age

Mark only one box.

☐ 21-25 years old
☐ 26-30 years old
☐ 31-35 years old
☐ 36-40 years old
☐ 41-45 years old
☐ 46-50 years old
☐ 51+ years old

2. Gender

Mark only one box.

☐ male
☐ female
3. Ethnicity

Mark only one box.

☐ White

☐ Black or African American

☐ Hispanic or Latino

☐ Native American or American Indian

☐ Asian or Pacific Islander

☐ other

4. From what institution did you receive your teaching certificate?


5. What grade level are you presently teaching?

Mark all that apply.

☐ PreK-K (Primary)

☐ 1-2 (Primary)

☐ 3-5 (Elementary)

☐ 6-8 (Middle)

☐ 9-12 (High)
6. Were you assigned a mentor for the 2017-2018 school year?

Mark one one box.

☐ yes

☐ no

7. Does your mentor teach on your grade level?

Mark one one box.

☐ yes

☐ no

8. Does your mentor teach the same subject as you?

Mark one one box.

☐ yes

☐ no

9. About how many hours do you meet with your mentor each week?

Mark one one box.

☐ 0-2 hours

☐ 3-5 hours

☐ 6-10 hours

☐ 11+ hours
10. Was there another teacher who has been helpful to you this year?

Mark one one box.

☐ yes

☐ no

11. If you answered yes to the last question, please specify the grade level and/or subject that teacher teaches.


12. How helpful has the mentoring experience been to your success as a new teacher?

Mark one one box.

☐ Extremely helpful

☐ Very helpful

☐ Somewhat helpful

☐ Not very helpful

☐ Not helpful at all

13. How helpful has your mentor been in assisting you with assessing and monitoring student progress?

Mark one one box.

☐ Extremely helpful

☐ Very helpful

☐ Somewhat helpful

☐ Not very helpful

☐ Not helpful at all
14. How helpful has your mentor been in assisting you with time management for non-instructional tasks?

Mark one one box.

☐ Extremely helpful

☐ Very helpful

☐ Somewhat helpful

☐ Not very helpful

☐ Not helpful at all

15. How helpful has your mentor been in helping you manage challenging student behavior?

Mark one one box.

☐ Extremely helpful

☐ Very helpful

☐ Somewhat helpful

☐ Not very helpful

☐ Not helpful at all
16. How helpful has your mentor been with encouraging you when facing minor failures/setbacks?

Mark one one box.
- [ ] Extremely helpful
- [ ] Very helpful
- [ ] Somewhat helpful
- [ ] Not very helpful
- [ ] Not helpful at all

17. How helpful was it for you to observe other teachers?

Mark one one box.
- [ ] Extremely helpful
- [ ] Very helpful
- [ ] Somewhat helpful
- [ ] Not very helpful
- [ ] Not helpful at all

18. How helpful was it being observed by your mentor and/or coach?

Mark one one box.
- [ ] Extremely helpful
- [ ] Very helpful
- [ ] Somewhat helpful
- [ ] Not very helpful
- [ ] Not helpful at all

19. How helpful has your mentor been in assisting you with lesson plans?
Mark one one box.

☐ Extremely helpful
☐ Very helpful
☐ Somewhat helpful
☐ Not very helpful
☐ Not helpful at all

20. How helpful has your mentor been in assisting you with differentiating your instruction?

Mark one one box.

☐ Extremely helpful
☐ Very helpful
☐ Somewhat helpful
☐ Not very helpful
☐ Not helpful at all

21. How helpful has your mentor been in providing you with emotional support?

Mark one one box.

☐ Extremely helpful
☐ Very helpful
☐ Somewhat helpful
☐ Not very helpful
☐ Not helpful at all

22. How helpful has your mentor been in assisting you with creating a positive learning environment?
Mark one one box.

☐ Extremely helpful
☐ Very helpful
☐ Somewhat helpful
☐ Not very helpful
☐ Not helpful at all

23. How helpful has your mentor been in assisting you with ways to effectively communicate with students, parents, and school staff?

Mark one one box.

☐ Extremely helpful
☐ Very helpful
☐ Somewhat helpful
☐ Not very helpful
☐ Not helpful at all

24. How helpful has your mentor been with reducing your stress as a new teacher?

Mark one one box.

☐ Extremely helpful
☐ Very helpful
☐ Somewhat helpful
☐ Not very helpful
☐ Not helpful at all

25. Do you have concerns at school that you have not addressed with your mentor?

Mark one one box.
26. If you answered yes to the last question, what areas of concern do you have?

27. Having had a mentor, how likely are you to return to the profession?

Mark one one box.

☐ Extremely likely
☐ Very likely
☐ Somewhat likely
☐ Not very likely
☐ Not likely at all

28. Had you NOT had a mentor, how likely were you to return to the profession?

Mark one one box.
☐ Extremely likely

☐ Very likely

☐ Somewhat likely

☐ Not very likely

☐ Not likely at all

29. What impact has mentoring had on your decision to remain in the profession?

30. How has your mentoring experience been a success and/or a failure?

Thank you for your participation in our survey.
APPENDIX B

NEW TEACHER HANDBOOK

Purpose of The induction Program

Teachers are the most important school-related factor in determining student success. Research suggests that one effective teacher can accelerate students’ learning over more than one grade level, while an ineffective teacher can cause students to fall irreparably behind. Moreover, strong induction processes ensure effective teachers stay in the classroom and ineffective teachers are supported to either become effective teachers or be counseled out of the classroom.

Induction programs help beginning teachers make a successful transition into teaching by providing extensive support through the first three years of teaching. These programs rely on the expertise of veteran teachers through Mentoring to provide a clinical, real-world training process. Professional learning is job-embedded and specific to the needs of each teacher. Districts providing effective support attract the most capable candidates, who remain on the job and improve student performance. Additionally, new teachers exposed to induction practices will develop better planning skills, handle discipline problems more effectively, conduct more productive classroom discussion, and remain in the profession longer.

Successful induction programs begin at the local level, and effective programs are characterized by strong leadership and management. The benefits of induction programs show a direct correlation to their intensity, i.e., the more programs provided, the greater their success. Programs that are not well-planned and conducted can be counterproductive. Half-way measures create unnecessary stress for beginning teachers and a regression to less effective teaching habits.

Induction in [___________] will focus upon:

- Retaining effective teachers
- Improving beginning teachers’ skills and performance
- Supporting teacher morale, communications, and collegiality
- Building a sense of professionalism, positive attitude
- Facilitating a seamless transition into the first year of teaching
Putting theory into practice
Preventing teacher isolation
Building self-reflection
## APPENDIX C

### HIGHLY QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certified</td>
<td>1676</td>
<td>1668</td>
<td>1626</td>
<td>1740</td>
<td>1839</td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Certified</td>
<td>1370</td>
<td>1357</td>
<td>1287</td>
<td>1244</td>
<td>1333</td>
<td>1359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Employees</td>
<td>3046</td>
<td>3036</td>
<td>2913</td>
<td>2984</td>
<td>3172</td>
<td>3239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total administrative/central office personnel</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Board Certified Teachers</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Teachers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees with Advanced Degrees</td>
<td>1240</td>
<td>1289</td>
<td>1287</td>
<td>1301</td>
<td>1355</td>
<td>1394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Teacher Salary</td>
<td>36,824</td>
<td>36,824</td>
<td>36,824</td>
<td>36,824</td>
<td>37,929</td>
<td>39,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Teacher Salary</td>
<td>56,787</td>
<td>56,924</td>
<td>56,323</td>
<td>55,850</td>
<td>55,654</td>
<td>56,949</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ETHNICITY OF TEACHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Asian/Other</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>91.3%</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ETHNICITY OF ADMINISTRATORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Asian/Other</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>85.6%</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### GENDER OF TEACHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>83.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>82.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### GENDER OF ADMINISTRATORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

NTI TEAM MEETING MINUTES

NEW TEACHER INDUCTION TEAM MINUTES
Thursday, October 19, 2017
7:45-9:45
Room 350

The most valuable resource we have is each other. If we don’t collaborate, our growth is limited to our own perspective.

I. Welcome New Members

New team members/roles included: [Redacted] – Principal; [Redacted] – 2nd year teacher; [Redacted] – Director Federal Programs; [Redacted] – 2nd Year to CC (from out of state); [Redacted] – Director; [Redacted] – Principals’ Mentor; [Redacted] – 2nd Year Teacher; [Redacted] – PE Teacher


Members/roles not present included: [Redacted] – 2nd year teacher; [Redacted] – AP; [Redacted] – ES Director; [Redacted] – Chief Human Resources Officer

The team suggested to add representatives from special education: district level and new teacher.
II. A Look Back

a. Improvements/Additions

i. Handbooks The usefulness of printed copies of the handbook was questioned. All agreed the hard copies were useful. The team is charged with reviewing the handbooks and offer feedback. (See attached) Mrs. [redacted] will create a description page for all of the observation types to be included in the revisions for next year. A request was also made to add the forms to Google and that has been completed.

ii. Mid-Year NTI Mrs. [redacted] shared that the first Mid-Year NTI Orientation was a success but asked for feedback in terms of how to improve for this year. (See suggestions below)

iii. End of Year Celebration Mrs. [redacted] shared the success of this event but would like feedback for improvements this year. (See suggestions below)

iv. Mentor Applications The team decided to keep the application process. At least one member suggested having mentors apply every 2-3 years to ensure the quality of the pool remains strong. Additionally, one team member noted after the meeting that we should consider not allowing someone in his/her last year of teaching to mentor because they establish such a strong relationship and then they leave.

b. University Collaborative – Dr. [redacted] shared that the [redacted] will be meeting soon to share ideas relating to our induction work. She gave several examples of how we can continue to work with area districts to offer even greater support to our teachers. The conference that our new teachers attend was shared and she asked that some of our team members consider submitting a presentation proposal.
c. Survey Results – [redacted] shared the survey results. The responses were mostly very positive. It was reported that these surveys will be required for all Y1 and Y2 teachers as part of the induction program, which should allow for greater reliability in results. The beginning of the year surveys went out today. Ms. [redacted] will collect the results and share the data at our next meeting.

d. Areas of Strength/Areas for Improvement

i. Mentoring vs. Induction The team discussed how the program has moved from a checklist of support to an induction program that offers emotional, professional, and a broad spectrum of support services.

ii. Release time for mentors/new teachers It was shared that though this is already recommended, we need to continue to encourage principals to allow mentors and new teachers time to reflect, observe, and collaborate to improve instruction in class.

III. New This Year

a. Getting Started for Guides/Mentors – The team suggested adding this to the Coordinator checklist. [redacted] said that she has teachers sign in to verify they have indeed watched this. Mrs. [redacted] will create a verification form and add it to the checklist and appendices of the Coordinator handbook.

b. Updated Forms for Collection of Information

c. Mentor Training

d. Surveys The team suggested surveying mentors at the end of each year to find out how we can improve the induction program to support both mentors and new teachers better. We need a volunteer to create this mentor survey.
IV. A Look Ahead

a. Mid-Year NTI (Teacher of the Year to Speak?) The team suggested to invite the Teacher of the Year to welcome our new employees to the district. Mrs. will follow up with to schedule her presentation.

*The team also had suggestions for the summer orientation. It was suggested that sessions for basic information be added to the orientation schedule. Dr. will work with to develop a schedule and invite teachers to lead these sessions.

b. End of Year Celebration (Speaker?) Casey Bethel was recommended as a guest speaker. will send contact information. If you are interested in planning for this event, please let know.

c. New Teachers in Special Areas

i. Art, Music, PE, Other The team recognized that this is an area in real need of improvement. shared how she had seen other counties approach mentoring for special areas and described how they might partner with us to offer support. The team would like to explore the idea of release time for this initiative as well as training approximately 3 mentors/area to serve as district mentors. will work collaboratively with to determine how can support our mentoring efforts in the areas of PE, Music, and Art.

ii. Counselors, Media Specialists Mrs. shared that no funds were available at this time to assist with mentoring support for these areas. The team will continue to look for ways to support these specific areas in the future.
d. Coordinator Responsibilities Please look at page 7 of the Coordinator handbook and give additional feedback for revisions of this checklist.

e. Moving from Meetings to Events
   i. Ghost Walks, Community Tours, Whine and Cheese Party, Dance Tickets

f. Mentor Training
   i. Data from Mentor Applications Mrs. [redacted] shared the data revealed having courageous conversations was the top area needed for training. The team felt that it needed to go beyond mentors and possibly provide training for all teachers that encouraged this in PLCs so that it became a culture of improvement for all. We need a volunteer or two to work on training in this area.

The team agreed that annual training should be required. It was suggested that the mentors receive some whole group training and then break off into groups based on years of mentoring experience or areas they may want additional information. We need a few volunteers to work on training in this area.

g. Guide Training [redacted] shared that it was difficult to transition from one state to Georgia even with the guide. She suggested and the team agreed that teachers needed more information on grading policies, county requirements, acronyms, etc. Please get with teachers new to our county to have them share what sessions we might offer to improve the transition to our county.

h. Y2, Y3 Induction The suggestion was made to explore how Y2, Y3 could move to a team approach to Induction. Several of our new teacher representatives said they really relied on the grade level team for support. We discussed training the mentors to help the new teachers identify their “team” of support. We also discussed the importance of principals being part of identifying teacher strengths throughout the building. The team also suggested that Y2, Y3 teachers be allowed to choose all four observation types. Mrs. [redacted] will make the necessary corrections in the manual for Y2, Y3 teachers to have full flexibility with observation types, unless directed differently by the administrator.
APPENDIX E

HUMAN RESOURCE MISSION STATEMENT

WELCOME TO HUMAN RESOURCES
WHERE PEOPLE ARE OUR TOP PRIORITY

Our mission is to recruit and retain a highly qualified, diverse workforce and to provide leadership and guidance in the development, implementation, and equitable administration of policies and procedures thus cultivating a positive work environment for employees and providing a world class educational opportunity for all Columbia County students.
APPENDIX F

ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>5170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>1575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>15,708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G

CONSENT FORM

May 22, 2017

Dear First-Year Teachers:

Let me begin by congratulating you on the near completion of your first year! You are probably tired, joyful, and reflective on the happenings of your first year.

I am writing to you as a doctoral student from the University of South Carolina, a first grade teacher in Columbia County, and a member of the New Teacher Induction Program Committee. As a member of the committee, I know how much work has gone into the mentoring component of the program as a means to make this first year the best one possible. As a committee, we seek to continue to make improvements in the induction program. One way for that to happen is to gather honest feedback from you, our first-year teachers, to seek your perceptions of many aspects of the mentoring component.

Of course, your participation is voluntary. But please know that it would not only benefit me as a doctoral student, but the analyzed data will be presented to the New Teacher Induction Program Committee in order to continue to improve the mentoring component to help future first-year teachers.

I thank you in advance for your help. The link below will allow you to participate in the survey, which should take about 15 minutes. If you have any questions or would like the results from the research, please feel free to contact me at bonnie.belanger@ccboe.net.

Please click on the link to complete the survey.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Belanger
First Grade Teacher
Stevens Creek Elementary
Doctoral Student
University of South Carolina
APPENDIX H

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. What did you enjoy the most from your mentoring experience?

2. What did you like least about it?

3. Nearly 50% of the Y1 teachers met with their mentors 3-5 hours per week. How many did you? Do you feel like you met often enough?

4. Do you think your first year of teaching would have been different had you NOT had a mentor? If yes, how would it have been different?

5. What were your greatest needs? Classroom management? Lesson plans? Differentiation? Creating a positive learning environment? How did your mentor help you through it?

6. How were your mentor’s listening skills? Examples

7. How were her communication skills? Examples?

8. Tell me about your feedback from your observations that you received from your mentor?

9. What kind of support did you receive in creating or sharing YOUR new ideas?

10. The three areas that scored the lowest were helpfulness with classroom management, observations made by mentors, and helpfulness with lesson plans. Which area was your mentor least helpful with? How could it have been better?

11. Some first-year teachers shared feelings of neglect from their mentors. How could we improve the program help mentors in that area?

12. How did your mentor help reduce your stress load? Examples?

13. Explain what would make the perfect mentor.

14. How could the mentoring experience be improved for future first-year teachers?

15. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience?