Stemming the Tide of Teacher Turnover: Supporting New Teachers Through a Comprehensive Cohort Model Induction Program

Shannon Bagwell Holmes

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons

Recommended Citation

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact digres@mailbox.sc.edu.
STEMMING THE TIDE OF TEACHER TURNOVER: SUPPORTING NEW TEACHERS THROUGH A COMPREHENSIVE COHORT MODEL INDUCTION PROGRAM

by

Shannon Bagwell Holmes

Bachelor of Science
Clemson University, 2009

Master of Education Administration and Supervision
Clemson University, 2015

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
2021

Accepted by:

Yasha Becton, Major Professor
Leigh D’Amico, Committee Member
Rachelle Curcio, Committee Member
Rhonda Jeffries, Committee Member
Tracey L. Weldon, Interim Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Susan Bagwell who has been a constant source of unconditional, unwavering love and support throughout my entire life. Her fierce belief in me is unparalleled and there is no doubt that I would not be where I am today without her. There were times in this process when I felt overwhelmed and she never let me give up on myself or this dream. She spent countless hours proofreading this dissertation for me and I am truly grateful for her wisdom and patience. I could not have done this without her. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my father, Steve Bagwell, who also encouraged me to pursue this dream. Lastly, I want to dedicate this to my husband, Barton Holmes, who also encouraged me the whole way through this process. I am forever grateful to them for their love and support. At the end of this process, Barton and I found out we were pregnant, so I also want to dedicate this to our baby girl, Hollyn Holmes, who will be joining our family in August of 2021.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would formally like to acknowledge, with deep appreciation, Dr. Yasha Jones Becton. Your guidance and input have been invaluable to me in this endeavor, and I am so thankful that I was afforded the opportunity to work with you as my advisor. Thank you for your patience and encouragement and for helping me maintain clarity throughout this process. I would also like to thank you for sharing in my enthusiasm for this research.

I would also like to thank Dr. Leigh D’Amico, Dr. Rachel Curcio, and Dr. Rhonda Jeffries for serving on my committee and helping me with this process.

Finally, I want to thank all the people who helped make this program possible. Thank you to the administrative team I was a part of during this process and thank you to all the participants who took part in this study and encouraged me along the way.
ABSTRACT

The problem of practice addressed in this mixed methods, action research study was how to provide better support to beginning teachers. The main objectives were to provide more emotional and instructional support for teachers in years one through three. This additional support was provided using cohort group mentoring as an alternative to the traditional one-on-one mentoring model and extending the mentoring program to provide teachers on an annual and first-year continuing contract with a mentor.

Six themes emerged from the qualitative data gathered from observations and responses to interview and survey questions. The six themes discovered were (1) being involved in the more comprehensive program, which utilized a team approach to mentoring negated feelings of isolation; (2) involvement improved teachers’ classroom management and instructional epistemology (capacity building); (3) the model created space for building meaningful and positive relationships; (4) the program made it possible for mentors to learn from one another through modeling in a group setting; (5) the more comprehensive induction model increased the amount of quality feedback by giving beginning teachers access to multiple mentors; and (6) the program provided more overall comprehensive support. The quantitative data revealed that teachers’ overall satisfaction with the mentoring program increased from September to May. Responses to these questions indicated teachers were satisfied with the program, felt it was more supportive than the traditional one-on-one model, believed that it provided both emotional and instructional support, thought that instruction was frequently being
discussed during meetings, felt as if they related to their cohort group members, were pleased that the program was extended to include annual and first-year continuing contract teachers, enjoyed having lunch with their cohort group, and felt that it was a safe place to ask and answer questions. After the first year of implementation, the retention rate of both induction and beginning teacher participants at the school increased, and the school’s retention rate was higher than that of the district. Participants felt the community of practice developed through the comprehensive induction program helped them cope with stress and transitioning to eLearning during the COVID-19 shutdown and gave them reassurance during that time.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**DEDICATION** ............................................................................................................................................... iii  
**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** .............................................................................................................................. iv  
**ABSTRACT** .................................................................................................................................................. v  
**LIST OF TABLES** ......................................................................................................................................... xi  
**LIST OF FIGURES** ........................................................................................................................................ xii  
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS** .......................................................................................................................... xiv  
**CHAPTER 1: NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM** ................................................................. 1  
  **PROBLEM OF PRACTICE** .......................................................................................................................... 3  
  **RESEARCH QUESTIONS** ........................................................................................................................... 4  
  **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK** ................................................................................................................ 5  
  **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY** ....................................................................................................................... 9  
  **POSITIONALITY** ....................................................................................................................................... 10  
  **OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY** ........................................................................................................... 12  
  **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY** ............................................................................................................. 14  
  **LIMITATIONS** ......................................................................................................................................... 16  
  **OVERVIEW OF DISSERTATION** .............................................................................................................. 16  
  **DEFINITION OF TERMS** ......................................................................................................................... 17  
**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW** ........................................................................................................... 19  
  **PURPOSE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW** ............................................................................................ 23  
  **LITERATURE REVIEW METHODOLOGY** .............................................................................................. 23
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT .......................................................... 24
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ................................................................................. 31
THE EFFECTS OF TURNOVER ON SCHOOLS ......................................................... 34
INDUCTION PROGRAMS’ IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ......................... 36
RELATED RESEARCH ............................................................................................. 38
SUMMARY ................................................................................................................ 47
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY ................................................................................. 50
PROBLEM OF PRACTICE ......................................................................................... 50
RESEARCH QUESTIONS ............................................................................................ 51
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY .......................................................................................... 51
DESIGN ....................................................................................................................... 52
CONTEXT OF THE STUDY .......................................................................................... 54
HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR EVHS ......................................................................... 57
PARTICIPANTS ........................................................................................................... 59
INTERVENTION .......................................................................................................... 61
DATA COLLECTION ..................................................................................................... 72
PROCEDURE ................................................................................................................ 78
DATA ANALYSIS ......................................................................................................... 79
SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS ......................................................................................... 82
SUMMARY .................................................................................................................... 82
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA .............................................. 84
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY ....................................................................................... 84
RESEARCH QUESTIONS ............................................................................................ 85
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY .................................................................................. 85
PILOT STUDY .................................................................................................. 85
SUMMARY OF PILOT STUDY ........................................................................ 92
RESEARCH STUDY FINDINGS ...................................................................... 93
COVID-19 AND THE COMPREHENSIVE MENTORING PROGRAM ................ 128
INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA ................................................................ 129
CONCLUSION ................................................................................................. 132
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS ............ 134
RESEARCH QUESTIONS ................................................................................ 135
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY ............................................................................ 135
SUMMARY OF THE STUDY .......................................................................... 136
ACTION PLAN ............................................................................................... 140
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE .......................................................... 141
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH ......................................... 144
CONCLUSION ............................................................................................... 144
REFERENCES .............................................................................................. 147
APPENDIX A: “THINGS WE WISH WE KNEW AS FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS”
DOCUMENT .................................................................................................. 158
APPENDIX B: PILOT STUDY SURVEY FOR INDUCTION TEACHERS .......... 159
APPENDIX C: PILOT STUDY SURVEY FOR MENTOR TEACHERS ............. 163
APPENDIX D: COHORT LUNCH OBSERVATION FORM .............................. 168
APPENDIX E: SEPTEMBER AND DECEMBER PARTICIPANT SURVEY ...... 170
APPENDIX F: FEBRUARY PARTICIPANT SURVEY ..................................... 174
APPENDIX G: MAY PARTICIPANT SURVEY .............................................. 178
**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 3.1 Participant Demographics............................................................... 60
Table 3.2 Mentor Teacher Interview Questions.............................................. 74
Table 3.3 Beginning Teacher Interview Questions ........................................ 74
Table 3.4 Survey Question Breakdown .......................................................... 76
Table 4.1 Likert Scale Question 1 Pilot Study Responses .................................. 90
Table 4.2 Likert Scale Question 1 Responses .................................................. 108
Table 4.3 Likert Scale Question 2 Responses .................................................. 111
Table 4.4 Likert Scale Question 3 Responses .................................................. 112
Table 4.5 Likert Scale Question 4 Responses .................................................. 114
Table 4.6 Likert Scale Question 5 Responses .................................................. 116
Table 4.7 Likert Scale Question 6 Responses .................................................. 118
Table 4.8 Likert Scale Question 7 Responses .................................................. 121
Table 4.9 Likert Scale Question 8 Responses .................................................. 124
Table 4.10 Likert Scale Question 9 Responses ............................................... 126
Table 4.11 Three-Year Retention Rate Data .................................................... 128
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework Web ................................................................. 5
Figure 1.2 Zones of Proximal Development Visual .................................................... 6
Figure 3.1 Cohort Group 1 Demographics ................................................................. 63
Figure 3.2 Cohort Group 2 Demographics ................................................................. 64
Figure 3.3 Cohort Group 3 Demographics ................................................................. 65
Figure 3.4 Cohort Group 4 Demographics ................................................................. 66
Figure 3.5 Cohort Group 5 Demographics ................................................................. 67
Figure 3.6 Data Collection Process Visual ................................................................. 79
Figure 4.1 Likert Scale Question 1 Pilot Study Graph .................................................. 90
Figure 4.2 Pilot Study Pie Graph 1 ............................................................................. 91
Figure 4.3 Pilot Study Pie Graph .............................................................................. 92
Figure 4.4 Qualitative Data Themes for Cohort Mentoring Model ............................. 94
Figure 4.5 Likert Scale Question Line Graph 1 ......................................................... 108
Figure 4.6 Likert Scale Question Line Graph 2 ......................................................... 110
Figure 4.7 Likert Scale Question Line Graph 3 ......................................................... 112
Figure 4.8 Likert Scale Question Line Graph 4 ......................................................... 113
Figure 4.9 Likert Scale Question Line Graph 5 ......................................................... 116
Figure 4.10 Likert Scale Question Line Graph 6 ....................................................... 118
Figure 4.11 Likert Scale Question Line Graph 7 ....................................................... 120
Figure 4.12 Likert Scale Question Line Graph 8 ....................................................... 123
Figure 4.13 Likert Scale Question Line Graph
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CoP ................................................................. Community of Practice
EVHS ........................................................................ Eagle Valley High School
MC ........................................................................... Multiple Choice
MKO ........................................................................ More Knowledgeable Other
SC ........................................................................... South Carolina
ZPD ........................................................................ Zone of Proximal Development
CHAPTER 1

NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Across the nation, the teacher shortage crisis is stretching schools to the limit and increasing the burden on those who remain in the field of education. The number of teachers leaving the profession—known as “leavers”—has increased substantially in the past 20 years (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017a). The fact that many teachers are choosing not to return to the classroom coupled with the increased demand nationwide for teachers has resulted in a shortage of teachers. Addressing the problem of teacher attrition would reduce the anticipated shortages more than any other isolated factor (Sutcher et al., 2016).

The exodus of teachers from the profession must be reversed because it ultimately has a destructive impact on students. Research suggests that high rates of teacher turnover hurt student achievement because schools are forced to fill vacancies with inexperienced and underqualified teachers who negatively impact student learning (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017b). The number of teachers leaving the profession within the first five years is evidence that our current induction programs are not as effective as they need to be to sufficiently support new teachers. According to The Condition of Education 2019 report by the National Center for Education Statistics, about 10% of classroom teachers are in their first three years of teaching, 28% of classroom teachers are in years three to nine, 39% of teachers had 10-20 years of experience, and 22% of teachers had
more than 20 years of experience (McFarland et al., 2019). This data on teachers’ years of experience is from the 2015-2016 school year; however, the congressionally mandated yearly report presents this as the United States’ most recent data on this topic in education (McFarland et al., 2019).

Due to the shortage, attention has been focused on how to recruit more people into the profession; however, it is equivalently imperative to focus on ways to retain the teachers already in the classroom (Sutcher et al., 2016). Teacher satisfaction and retention can both be improved through strong mentoring and induction programs; these programs can also increase student academic achievement (Greenberg et al., 2016). Therefore, it is essential that steps are taken to strengthen these programs to make them more effective. The first-year turnover is potentially cut by more than half when teachers are provided a mentor, support from one-on-one conversations with the principal, opportunities for collaboration, extra resources, and are part of a strong teacher network. Regrettably, only 2.5% of beginning teachers receive this type of comprehensive support (Sutcher et al., 2016) and only three states in the United States meet New Teacher Center’s criteria for a high-quality mentoring program (Goldrick, 2016). The three states that required multi-year support for beginning teachers included Connecticut, Delaware, and Iowa.

The teacher attrition rate in the United States over the past decade was around 8% but the percentage was much higher for novices, teachers in high-poverty schools, and teachers in the South (Sutcher et al., 2016). The reasons for teachers leaving vary, however, two-thirds of teachers choose not to return for reasons other than retirement. These reasons include lack of ample training, mentoring, and administrative support, in addition to the pressures due to test-based accountability, low salaries, and poor teaching
conditions (Podolsky et al., 2016). “The teaching workforce continues to be a leaky bucket, losing hundreds of thousands of teachers each year—the majority of them before retirement age” (Sutcher et al., 2016, p. 2).

Resembling the nation, South Carolina (SC) is also facing the challenge of retaining teachers, and the problem is exacerbated in Southern states which have a particularly high turnover rate (movers and leavers) compared to other regions of the country (Sutcher et al., 2016). Between the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years, there was a 10% increase in the number of SC teachers choosing not to return to the classroom (Garrett, 2019). Based on data from the 2018-2019 school year, 48% of the teachers who left, excluding retirees, had five or fewer years of teaching experience in a SC public school classroom, and 25% of first-year teachers hired for the school year chose not to return (Garrett, 2019). This is a 3% increase of first-year teachers choosing not to return from the prior year, which is evidence that the trend of teachers leaving is not unique to one school year, and the rate at which teachers leave continues to grow (Cerra, 2018).

**Problem of Practice**

Teaching has essentially become a temporary occupation (Mawhinney & Rinke, 2019). At the end of each school year, teachers close their classroom doors for the last time and exit the teaching profession. The problem of practice addressed in this study encompasses the need to provide adequate support to beginning teachers through a comprehensive induction program to reduce teacher attrition. Schools are not doing enough to support beginning teachers. Novice teachers who are inadequately supported or underprepared are more likely to leave the profession, and today’s students are more
likely than ever before to be placed in classrooms with beginning teachers (Woods, 2016).

Key factors attributed to teacher turnover are compensation, teacher preparation, support, and school leadership (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Without a proper induction program in place, schools risk losing beginning teachers due to a lack of support and preparation. Teachers entering the profession are underprepared and ill-equipped to deal with the stress and demands of teaching. Teachers entering the profession lack experience in selecting materials, are unfamiliar with learning theory and child psychology and have had few opportunities to observe others teaching, and receive feedback on their instruction (Ingersoll et al., 2012). The researcher chose to examine the problem of practice of better supporting beginning teachers to reduce attrition because turnover is a problem at the local level, state level, and national level. Teacher attrition harms our nation’s students because beginning teachers are typically less effective than veteran teachers at increasing student achievement; however, high-quality induction programs hasten teachers’ professional development which makes them more effective faster (Goldrich, 2016).

**Research Questions**

The following research question and sub-questions were addressed by this study:

1. What impact does involvement in a comprehensive mentoring program for beginning teachers have on participants?
   a. How does using a cohort model of mentoring impact overall teacher satisfaction?
b. How did teacher perceptions of the newly implemented program change over the course of the academic school year?

c. How does involvement in a comprehensive induction program increase the retention rate of beginning teachers at EVHS?

These questions were selected to address the stated problem of improving the support offered to novice teachers. The questions derive from the theoretical framework because they focus on creating a community of practice that benefits both entry-level and long-term members of the profession. The data collected will be used to determine if scaffolding support is a way to improve instruction and if the cohort mentoring groups provide teachers with a sense of family and support, which in turn reduces the teacher turnover rate.

**Theoretical Framework**

![Theoretical Framework](image)

Figure 1.1 Theoretical framework web.
According to Jerome Bruner’s (1976) Theory of Scaffolding, a person learns best when supports are gradually removed and the novice can perform tasks independently. Bruner’s theory is similar to and was influenced by Vygotsky’s (1930s) zone of proximal development theory, and the two theories are sometimes used synonymously. Scaffolding consists of the activities provided by a more competent peer to support a novice as he or she is led through the zone of proximal development (McLeod, 2019). According to these theories, everyone has zones of development. The initial or inner zone is what an individual can do on his or her own without receiving any support or help. The next zone is what an individual can do with guidance. The final zone is what an individual cannot yet do. Scaffolding provides the individual with the proper support to transition through each zone and into the next level zone of competence.

Figure 1.2 Zones of proximal development visual.

Scaffolding is most effective when the support is specific to the individual needs of the learner. This support allows the beginner to solve a problem or complete a task that
he or she would previously not have been able to do without support (Wood et al., 1976). As the apprentice progresses in his or her learning, the support provided by the mentor is gradually tapered until it is no longer needed. In the beginning, the novice is dependent on assistance from the more knowledgeable other, but as he or she becomes more independent and attains new skills and knowledge, the support can be gradually faded (Wheeler, 2017). Therefore, support for novice teachers should not completely be withdrawn at once at the end of the first year.

Lev Vygotsky contended that people learn best in a social environment by constructing meaning through interaction with others (Wheeler, 2017). Both Bruner and Vygotsky support the premise that one learns best in a social environment. Bruner’s theory of scaffolding is part of social constructivist theory.

The Theory of Situated Learning was developed in the early 1990s by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. Key features of situated learning are the ideas that learning is a social interaction, and that it should happen unintentionally within an authentic setting. This can happen when learners become involved in a community of practice (CoP) that models certain principles and behaviors for the learner to acquire (Culatta, 2019). Over time, the novice becomes more engaged and involved in the community where he or she learns the values and skills needed to become an expert. Lave and Wenger (1991) referred to this phenomenon as legitimate peripheral participation. This is the idea that it is unavoidable for learners to be involved in communities of practitioners, and as the individual moves toward full involvement in the sociocultural practices of the community, he or she begins to master the knowledge and skills of the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991).
A group of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn to improve their practice through regular interactions make up a community of practice. For something to be considered a community of practice, it must have three critical characteristics. First, the group must have a common domain or shared interest/competence. Second, the group must be a community. This means members engage and interact with one another to share information and help one another develop. Third, the members must be practitioners (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Consequently, members of the group “develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems – in short and shared practice” (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 2). Due to these interactions, group members develop a similar approach to the practice and a shared set of beliefs. Communities of practice are valuable as they offer their members a platform to share information and use the knowledge shared to make changes or adjustments to his or her work and the way he or she supports, encourages, and collaborates with others. Communities of practice are essential because they can connect people, provide a shared context, and introduce collaborative processes. They also enable dialogue between people allowing them to explore new possibilities and solve challenging problems while creating new, mutually beneficial opportunities. This open dialogue helps stimulate learning through authentic communication and provides the means for its members to capture and share existing knowledge while also generating new knowledge to help people transform their practices (Cambridge et al., 2005).

An exemplarily model community of practice must have certain characteristics. Those characteristics include: a skillful and reputable leader, the right rhythm and mix of
activities, support from organizational leaders, adequate resources, self-governance, a sense of ownership, trust, recognition for contributions, high expectations for value creation, connection to a broader field, and interactions with other communities (Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium, 2016). These characteristics outlined by the Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium are essential for an effective community of practice.

Due to the high levels of stress teachers are facing, more must be done to develop the whole person. Through scaffolding techniques to improve the teacher’s practice and a community group, teachers will find the support needed to move from the periphery to the center of the community, and in the process, the needs of the whole person will be met. Members of the community of practice should help each other cope and deal with stress and new experiences. “If it takes a village to raise a child, it may well take a whole schoolhouse to raise a teacher” (Hall & Simeral, 2017, p. 42).

**Purpose of the Study**

The fundamental purpose of this study was to determine how to create a comprehensive induction program to better support the emotional and instructional growth of beginning teachers to improve teacher retention and quality. Research indicates that increasing support through mentoring and induction programs for teachers may raise retention and advance the quality of instruction (Woods, 2016). The researcher wanted to determine if modifying the induction program to include cohort mentoring groups and scaffolding would better support the instructional and emotional needs of teachers leading to higher teacher satisfaction and better retention rates. The researcher wanted to understand how a more comprehensive, team approach to mentoring would affect the
value of the program and if it could be used to reduce teacher turnover within her school. The purpose of the mentoring cohorts was to reduce the feeling of isolation by providing beginning teachers with a school family and a sense of belonging. For this study, the term “new teacher” is defined as a teacher with less than three total years of teaching experience in a public school this definition was taken from the Education Amendments Act of 1972, also known as Title IX. Therefore, in the context of the study, new or beginning teacher refers to someone in his or her first, second, or third year of teaching in a public school.

“Research demonstrates that comprehensive, multi-year induction programs…reduce the rate of new teacher attrition, provide a stronger return on states’ and school districts’ investment, and improve student learning” (Goldrick, 2016, p. i). This action research study provided a means to determine if extending the program beyond teachers’ induction years, would allow time for adequate preparation in pedagogical methods and skills, which are necessary to keep teachers in the classroom (Ingersoll et al., 2012). The study also allowed the researcher to measure the effects of providing teachers with the opportunity to observe their peers and receive regular feedback on those observations. This cycle of observations and feedback is significantly related to whether teachers remained in the field (Ingersoll et al., 2012).

**Positionality**

While assessing the issue of high new-teacher turnover, the researcher cannot help but reflect on her career and the struggles she faced as a new teacher. “Three years, you have to promise me you will give it three years.” The researcher can still hear her cooperating teacher speaking those words to her when she finished her student teaching
assignment. She, of course, promised her that she would, but she did not understand the seriousness of that request until she began her first-year teaching. The life of a first-year teacher is difficult. It is full of obstacles, trials, evaluations, and learning experiences. The researcher’s cooperating teacher was aware of the challenges that lay ahead and knew that it would take roughly three years for her to really find her way. Luckily, the researcher was fortunate enough to begin her teaching career with a mentor. If not for her support, and guidance, the researcher is not sure she would have made it through those first three years. Therefore, it is her firm belief that a strong induction program is what beginning teachers need to remain in the profession, and it is imperative that school leaders discover better means of meeting the challenges that schools are now facing and find ways to provide the type of additional structure and support so desperately needed.

When this research was conducted, the researcher served as the Associate Principal of the high school being studied. The 2019-2020 school year, which was the year the changes to the program were implemented, was her fifth year in administration. The researcher was promoted from assistant principal to associate principal after her first full year in administrator. The associate principal position is a year-round position and is the primary administrator in charge of curriculum and instructional aspects of all grades and content areas. Prior to becoming an administrator, the researcher taught in two public high schools in the same area and district for seven years. The researcher left the district she taught in to become an administrator in another district in a different county. As a classroom teacher, the researcher served as a mentor for new teachers as well as for practicum teachers from local colleges. In her position as associate principal, she is over the induction program at the school and would be considered an “insider in collaboration
with other insiders” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 40). She conducted this action research study with new teachers and mentor teachers working within her school. Due to the researcher’s supervising role, she worked hard to establish a relationship of trust and support with the teacher participants so they felt as comfortable as possible during interviews and were willing to speak honestly with her about their perceptions of the program.

**Overview of Methodology**

“Action research is usually defined as an inquiry conducted by practitioners in their own educational settings in order to advance their practice and improve their students’ learning” (Effron & Ravid, 2013, p. 9). This sets action research apart from traditional research because participants play a fundamental role in the “design and methodology of the research” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 1). Knowing the participants and collaboration with them helps an action researcher gain insight into the participants’ situation and lived experience. “This subjective insight provides practitioners with opportunities to explore systematically, and with care, multiple options for action, with sensitivity” (Effron & Ravid, 2013, p. 4). Action research is important because it allows practitioners to use their intimate knowledge of the school’s inner workings to investigate problems or phenomena within their schools that need to be changed, improved, or validated (Effron & Ravid, 2013). This study is action research as it meets the fundamental requirements to be considered as such. Effron and Ravid (2013) outlined the following as aspects of action research: (a) constructivist, (b) situational, (c) practical, (d) systematic, and (e) cyclical.
The study was constructivist due to the researcher being a generator of knowledge about the teachers’ perceptions of the current induction program and how it could be improved to better meet their needs. It was situational because the study was conducted within the school where the researcher was employed. The researcher understood the participants, the current program, and the school. The outcome of the study was focused on finding a solution to the problem at a specific school. Since the fundamental purpose of this study was to determine how to create a comprehensive induction program to better support the emotional and instructional growth of beginning teachers in order to improve teacher retention and quality at the researcher’s school, the study was practical (Effron & Ravid, 2013). Additionally, it was systematic because the researcher employed intentional strategies to produce reliable data. It was also cyclical; after the cohort model was implemented at the school level, the results were analyzed to determine if this model should be applied district-wide. This action research study used a mixed-methods case study design to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

A mixed-methods design was the most appropriate approach to this study because the qualitative data from observations, open-ended survey responses, and interviews were used to measure how effective the program was in building teacher capacity and reducing the feeling of stress and isolation. Qualitative data was collected through surveys, interviews, and observations. The data gathered from these qualitative methods was used to investigate how individuals make sense and meaning out of their unique experiences with the induction program and whether teachers were growing as a result of the program. The quantitative data was used to measure the program’s impact on teacher retention. The quantitative data from the Likert scale questions was utilized to analyze
teacher’s attitudes about the program. Due to the mixed methods design of the study, the researcher was able to view the results and data collected both subjectively and objectively. The mixed methods approach is beneficial because it draws on the strengths of quantitative and qualitative research (Effron & Ravid, 2013; Herr & Anderson, 2015;). A mixed methods design helps with triangulation of data because it shows convergence and corroboration when quantitative and qualitative data are compared (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The mixed methods design produces valid results, because the researcher uses multiple methods and different data tools to explore different aspects of the same question (Effron & Ravid, 2013). This creates validity because the researcher has a holistic data set to use when making judgements and prescriptions.

Before implementing a new strategy or approach to address an issue, it is important to have a good understanding of the underlying causes of the problem (Effron & Ravid, 2013). A survey given at the end of the 2018-2019 school year helped reveal how teachers felt about the original induction program and its strengths and weaknesses. This first set of survey data served as the baseline data. The information collected was used to design and implement appropriate strategies to improve the problem of practice. Feedback from the participants was used throughout the process to monitor and adjust how the program was working and to assure the quality of the intervention.

**Significance of the Study**

While a significant amount of research has been done on induction programs and their impact on teachers, there is no known research on the type of cohort model induction program created and implemented in this study. This is because effective mentoring programs require careful planning, consideration, and reflection and this study
lays out the ideas and process the researcher used to create a more comprehensive induction program in her school. To develop a more complete induction program like the one in this study, plans must be made in advance to allow other school systems to be planned around the program. In addition, the reflection that occurred between the researcher and the participants as a result of the action research study was valuable at all phases of implementation and the program going forward. Stephen Corey introduced action research into education. “Corey contended that educational change will not take place unless practitioners are involved in developing curriculum and instructional practices, drawing on the experiential knowledge they gain through inquiry” (Effron & Ravid, 2013, p. 6). Through this study, the researcher gained insight and knowledge to develop an improved induction program.

Mentoring done within a cohort group exposes teachers to a more diverse information base and allows teachers to be a part of a group within the school. The mentoring relationship is beneficial for novice teachers because they have more experts to seek advice and guidance from about classroom management and instructional strategies. In schools today, the teaching force is comprised of teachers who are predominately middle aged and are in their mid to late career (Evans, 2001), and EVHS is no exception. Therefore, veteran teachers who are involved in the program are also exposed to new ideas and get the gratification of supporting a new generation of teachers.

Year after year, time and money are devoted to training teachers. By lowering the attrition rate, those resources can be used in other aspects of instruction such as differentiated professional development based on each teacher’s needs. This is good for individual teachers, students, schools, and school districts.
Limitations

While the researcher does not believe the small sample size is a limitation, she recognizes that some may view it as one. The researcher believes the sample size is adequate because the findings of the study were meant to improve a problem at the school where the study was conducted. Dr. Adolf Brown spoke at a conference for school leaders in June of 2019. At the conference, he stressed the importance of every student. “Each student is a study of one” (Brown, 2019). Therefore, the researcher has the same sentiment about teachers and feels that each teacher is a study of one and each school is a study of one. It is up to each school leader to determine if the findings from this study can be generalized to his or her school setting as he or she is the person who understands that cite the best (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The most prevalent limitation of this study was that the researcher had a limited budget for making changes to the induction program. Therefore, approval from the district office to fund initiatives for the induction program at EVHS had to be obtained by the researcher. For example, the researcher had to seek approval for funds to pay teachers to mentor teachers past their induction contract level. Also, the researcher had to seek approval for substitutes to give mentor teachers release time to go observe their mentees. Funds were also needed for activities outside of school.

Overview of Dissertation

This action research study was developed and elucidated in five comprehensive chapters. Chapter 1 is an overview of the study and provides the context of the problem and rationale for the study. Chapter 2 covers an in-depth review of the relevant literature on the importance of a quality induction programs, a brief history of mentoring, and cases
studies about mentoring and how it relates to teacher and student achievement. Chapter 3 explains in detail the methodology and research design of the study. Chapter 3 gives details about the participants and how they were selected, and specifically describes the changes made to the induction program at EVHS. It is a detailed synopsis of the steps the researcher used to carry out the research study. This includes pertinent details about the type of study, the participants, the data collection tools, and data analysis strategies. Chapter 4 presents the data collected from the surveys, observations, and interviews. It includes an analysis of the data collected. Conclusively, Chapter 5 is a discussion of the research and its relevance and the next steps for further research.

**Definition of Terms**

*Beginning Teacher:* “A teacher in a public school who has been teaching less than a total of three complete school years” (Education Amendments Act of 1972).

*Community of Practice:* “Groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 1).

*Comprehensive Induction:* “A multi-year, structured program of mentorship and professional development in which trained mentors provide constructive feedback to new teachers” (Woods, 2016, p. 2).

*Induction:* “A process—a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process—that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain new teachers and seamlessly progresses them into a lifelong learning program” (Wong, 2004, p. 41).

*Leavers:* Those who exit the teaching occupation altogether (Ingersoll, 2001).
Mentoring: “The personal guidance provided, usually by seasoned veterans, to beginning teachers in schools” (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004, p. 29).

Movers: Those who travel from one school or district to another (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 503).

Proximal Development: “The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Scaffolding: The method in which “support is tapered off as it becomes unnecessary, much as a scaffold is removed from a building during construction. The student will then be able to complete the task again on his own” (McLeod, 2019, “What is Scaffolding” section, para. 3).
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem of practice addressed in this study is the lack of adequate support provided to beginning teachers. National longitudinal data from the Baccalaureate and Beyond survey reveals that more than 44% of beginning teachers leave within the first five years (Ingersoll et al., 2018). In addition, the number of teachers who leave after their first year has also grown (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Due to negative first-year experiences, novice teachers move from one school to another or leave teaching all together (Alexander & Alexander, 2019). This data reveals that teachers are not receiving the support they need. A review of the literature indicates that the added support provided through a comprehensive induction program can reduce teacher attrition and increase beginning teachers’ competency. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine how to create a comprehensive induction program to better support the emotional and instructional growth of beginning teachers to improve teacher retention and quality.

It is frequently stated that people are an organization’s most valuable resource (Wenger, 2018), but “too often overlooked in the quest for school improvement is a focus on the professionals who can make it happen” (Goldrick, 2007, p. 4). Unfortunately, school leaders will often assign a beginning teacher a mentor and leave it up to the mentor and novice to seek each other out (Britton et al., 2003; Moir, 2003). School leadership cannot simply assign a mentor to a new teacher and leave the fate of both
teachers up to chance; instead, schools must create induction programs that are people-driven, not compliance-driven (Mekos & Smith 2018), and school leadership must take an active role in monitoring and assessing their mentoring programs (Mekos & Smith, 2018; Moir, 2009; Wong, 2004).

While school districts generally understand the importance of mentoring and induction programs, there are still questions about how to best structure mentoring programs and the content that should be covered for the programs to be successful and provide adequate support for teachers (Alexander & Alexander, 2019). To design an effective program, school leaders must have an in-depth understanding of the issues that negatively influence their organization. For example, new teachers leave the profession due to work overload, professional isolation, student behavior, and a culture of judging teachers based on student performance (Watt & Richardson, 2011). Consequently, it is imperative that school leaders understand that isolation, classroom discipline, student motivation, and heavy workloads are instrumental factors in the growing attrition rates of novice teachers (Kearney, 2014). In addition, they also need to realize that the on-the-job support new teachers are currently receiving their first years in the profession is not enough (Goldrick, 2009). Therefore, this research is relevant because new approaches to achieving sustainable, improved mentoring are needed (Paris, 2013) and there is limited research on cohort group mentoring at the secondary level.

Determining how to support teachers adequately is important because without proper support new teachers are left struggling day to day which results in high teacher attrition rates and the loss of teachers has a large impact on the overall educational system (Moir, 2003).
One impact on the system is the negative effect teacher turnover has on student achievement, especially in schools that are hard to staff and serve minority and impoverished students (American Institutes for Research, 2015b; Goldrick, 2009; Greenberg et al., 2016; Haynes, 2014; Ingersoll, 2012; Moir, 2003; Sun, 2012). Due to the instability and high attrition rates of new teachers, Richard Ingersoll (2012) described teaching as a profession that “cannibalizes its young” (p. 47). Teacher attrition not only disrupts student learning, it also leads to a decline in teacher morale, and costs our organizations billions of dollars (Mekos & Smith, 2018).

The inadequate amount of support provided to teachers was addressed through a theoretical framework based on learning through real life experience and collaboration within a community of practice that is scaffolded over an extended period. The researcher sought to understand how an induction program based on ideas from Bruner’s (1976) theory of scaffolding, Vygotsky’s (1930s) theory of zones of proximal development, and Lave and Wenger’s ideas of situated learning (1991) and involvement in a community of practice (1991, 1998) could improve the quality of an induction program. The researcher also sought to determine how a more comprehensive, team approach to mentoring could affect the value of the program and if it could reduce teacher turnover within her school. To determine the effects of cohort mentoring groups, extending the program past the teacher’s initial year, and focused professional development on teacher retention and satisfaction, the following research question and sub-questions were addressed:

1. What impact does involvement in a comprehensive mentoring program for beginning teachers have on participants?
a. How does using a cohort model of mentoring impact overall teacher satisfaction?

b. How did teacher perceptions of the newly implemented program change over the course of the academic school year?

c. How does involvement in a comprehensive induction program increase the retention rate of beginning teachers at EVHS?

Induction and mentoring are often used synonymously; however, mentoring is only one, albeit very important, component of an effective induction program. Induction is the entire process; it is comprehensive, organized, and sustained professional development used to develop, sustain, and retain teachers (Wong, 2004). Mentoring is individual assistance and guidance provided to novice teachers by experienced veterans (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). It is the actions of the mentor that helps a new teacher survive (Wong, 2004). Therefore, the focus of this literature review is to establish the components of a comprehensive induction program and determine how the elements of an effective induction program can reduce isolation and build capacity in teachers through communities of practice, and to also determine if scaffolding the program past a teacher’s first year can yield transformational growth for the teacher and the students assigned to the teacher.

This chapter will explain the purpose of the literature review. It will also discuss the process of selecting the literature incorporated in this review and the theoretical framework on which this study is founded. Additionally, it will provide a short history of the evolution of induction programs, the impact successful induction programs have on schools and students, and a summary of research related to this topic.
Purpose of the Literature Review

Herr and Anderson (2015) described the literature review as a conversation between literature and data. The literature review “links theory to practice” and provides a synthesis of prior research and relevant ideas that relate to the study to help the reader place the current research into an existing knowledge base (Effron & Ravid, 2013, pp. 17-18). The inclusion of action research is substantiated because action research is cyclical, and follows a plan-act-observe-reflect cycle. “This process is done in relation to a larger body of literature that helps illuminate the findings, deepen the understanding, and suggest directions for the next iteration” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 105). A review of the literature was essential to determine the fundamental elements an induction program should include. The literature also helped to identify themes, frequently cited causes of teacher dissatisfaction, reasons for teacher turnover, and the components of quality induction programs. This knowledge provided the researcher a means to identify weaknesses in the current induction program at her school and revealed methods that have the potential to address these weaknesses to meet the needs of teachers, and mitigate the problems or issues that drive teachers away from the profession.

Literature Review Methodology

The literature used in this review was scrutinized prior to being included, and the sources were found in electronic databases such as: The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Journal Storage (JSTOR), and Research Gate. In addition to the peer-reviewed journals found in these databases, the researcher also included publications from The South Carolina Department of Education, The United States Department of Education, and New Teacher Center. New Teacher Center focuses on
improving student learning and developing teachers and school leaders. In addition, the researcher chose to include the works of Richard Ingersoll and Ellen Moir, who are both well-known and respected in this area of research. Dr. Richard Ingersoll is recognized for his work on a broad range of educational topics including: teacher supply, demand, shortages, and turnover, as well as induction and mentoring for beginning teachers and the challenge of underqualified teachers (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2019). Ellen Moir founded The New Teacher Center; she advocates for teachers to receive the supports they need to help themselves and their students succeed; she also believes that all students deserve to have a teacher that is functioning at his or her best level (Moir, 2018). Moir has done extensive research to determine how schools can better support new teachers.

The researcher searched for themes and found the most frequently cited reasons for teachers leaving are: isolation, high levels of stress, salaries, classroom resources, student behavior, accountability, lack of professional development, lack of shared leadership, and lack of support from school leadership (Alexander & Alexander, 2019; Goldrick, 2009; Ingersoll et al, 2018; Johnson et al., 2010; Mekos & Smith, 2018; Sun, 2012). The researcher was able to refine the problem of practice based on knowledge and understanding gained from the literature. The literature also helped establish the theoretical framework lens used to develop a plan to address the challenges that teachers face every day.

Theoretical Framework Development

The theories chosen to frame the problem of practice and bridge the literature with the intervention plan are Bruner’s theory of scaffolding (1976), Vygotsky’s zones of
proximal development (1930s), Lave and Wenger’s theory of situated learning (1991), and Lave and Wenger’s theory of communities of practice (1991). These theories are closely related and complement one another. They seamlessly fit together and each theory supports the concepts found in the others.

**Bruner’s Theory of Scaffolding**

Bruner’s original work on scaffolding is based on an idea from Vygotsky that learning through social transaction and interaction is more effective than learning in isolation (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Vygotsky (1978) defined the zone of proximal development as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under…guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Bruner’s idea of scaffolding and Vygotsky’s zones of proximal development are closely related. At the micro level, scaffolding is the interactions between a more knowledgeable other (MKO) and a mentee (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005), which is important because the mentor, acting as the more knowledgeable other, guides the novice through their zones of proximal development until they can accomplish tasks on their own without support. Goals set at the micro level should support the goals set at the macro level (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). The micro level in this study was developing teachers and improving student learning in a teacher’s classroom and providing the right amount of support to prevent teacher attrition. This micro level goal supports the macro level goal to realize system-wide improvement, and close the achievement gap.

The researcher believed that her school district should extend or scaffold the induction program beyond a teacher’s first year to include teachers in their second and
third years of teaching. The literature also supports this concept (American Institutes for Research, 2015a; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Sun, 2012; Wong, 2004). Induction should be a multi-year developmental process because it can take numerous years to learn to teach (Wong, 2004). Similar to a scaffold constructed around a new building to provide support throughout the construction process, mentors should surround new teachers in a community of practice and provide differentiated support to teachers depending on the level of assistance they need. Individuals learn best when they are working in their zone of proximal development with the support of a mentor; the interactions between the more knowledgeable other and the novice create potential for learning as the learner searches for and generates solutions to problems and expands his or her learning through the ZPD (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). This inquiry process is possible with assistance by an experienced and more knowledgeable other, the mentor, who shares lessons and knowledge from their experiences with the novice. Rarely, is this type of knowledge gained in an academic setting, and this learning process helps novice teachers define goals and engage in continuous self-reflection and assessment, and by engaging in this process, the mentor teacher offers developmental support to new teachers and shares the accountability for that teacher’s growth (American Institutes for Research, 2015a). The more knowledgeable other gradually removes supports based on the novice’s development until the novice no longer needs the supports.

A novice moves more easily through their ZPD when provided with three certain supports (McLeod, 2019). These supports include the assistance of a more knowledgeable other, social interactions with an experienced mentor that allows the learner to observe and practice the skill being learned, and activities designed by the
MKO that support the novice as he or she is guided through the ZPD (McLeod, 2019). The literature supports these three concepts and the concepts helped to establish interventions for the induction program at EVHS.

For an induction program to be effective, it must have quality mentors, because mentors are the foundation of the program. An effective mentor is good at providing personal and instructional support to adult learners (Mekos & Smith, 2018). Beginners need emotional support because teachers with less experience are more frequently affected by elevated stress and if they do not have support from a mentor or MKO, they succumb to attrition (Paris, 2013). This is because teaching is especially hard for new teachers who must learn how to deal with the challenges a new career brings and do the same work as their veteran counterparts without the advantage of experience (Mekos & Smith, 2018). Without support from the more knowledgeable other, adult interactions are limited leaving teachers feeling isolated, lonely, and abandoned (Alexander & Alexander, 2019). Mentors make new teachers feel less alone and isolated, and this emotional support is critical (Moir, 2003).

The second concept of providing social interactions with an experienced mentor allows the learner to observe and practice new skills. New teachers need extra time to observe, plan, and receive feedback (Alexander & Alexander, 2019). Ingersoll (2012) found that the two factors that had the greatest influence on teacher retention were having a mentor who taught the same subject and having time to collaborate with other teachers. School leaders should create a schedule for new teachers to observe successful veteran teaches; likewise, novice teachers should also be observed and receive feedback from their peers and administration (Alexander & Alexander, 2019). In further support of this
concept, Alexander and Alexander (2019) found that new teachers need regular meetings and a support group to discuss the trials and tribulations of the job. When new teachers are included in a supportive community of educators, they are more likely to sustain the enthusiasm and sense of purpose that led them to the profession (Moir, 2003).

The literature also supports the third concept, of having activities designed by the MKO that support the novice as he or she is guided through the ZPD. Mentors help novice teachers reach their goals by discussing and providing feedback from classroom observations, co-developing lesson plans, co-teaching, and modeling lessons for the novice to observe (Moir, 2003). Mentor teachers should work with novice teachers to develop important skills such as: integrating what is learned in professional developments into practice, analyzing instructional strategies and reflecting on the approaches used, and using data to guide instruction; whereby they make their implicit knowledge explicit through coaching and working with the beginning teacher (American Institutes for Research, 2015b).

**Situated Learning and Communities of Practice**

The idea of social interaction found in the three concepts above is supported by Lave and Wenger’s ideas of situated learning and inclusion in a community of practice. The third concept of beginning teachers learning while being supported and guided by a more knowledgeable other corresponds with the theory of situated learning. Additionally, the first two concepts of teachers needing a mentor and having time to work with an MKO are aspects of belonging to a community of practice.

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of situated learning is the idea or belief that learning must take place in an authentic setting. The first principle of situated learning is
that knowledge is best presented and acquired in an authentic situation (Culatta, 2019). Ingersoll (2012) found that due to the complexity of the work teachers do and the skills they must learn, pre-employment teacher training is not sufficient to provide the knowledge and skill needed to be successful; instead, “a significant portion of this knowledge can be acquired only on the job. This view holds that schools must provide an environment where novices can learn how to teach, survive, and succeed as teachers” (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 47). It is necessary for schools to provide this supportive environment through a comprehensive induction program because the skills teachers need to learn to be successful are often learned on the job and not in a certification program or practicum or student teaching field experience (American Institutes for Research, 2015b). This is best done in a collaborative fashion because mentors can help beginning teachers learn to integrate and interpret what they are learning as they work with students by making their implicit knowledge explicit (American Institutes for Research, 2015a).

This idea of collaboration reflects the second principle of situated learning, which is that learning must happen in a collaborative environment with social interaction (Culatta, 2019). These theories are interwoven and when combined create an integrated approach to mentoring and induction. Lave and Wenger’s idea of communities of practice is necessary for new teacher support, and researchers agree that it is extremely valuable (American Institutes for Research, 2015a; Kearney, 2014; Moir, 2003, 2009; Wong, 2004).

**Communities of Practice**

A community of practice is a group of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and through regular interaction, learn to do it better (Wenger &
Wenger-Trayner, 2015). To be a community of practice, a group must have a common domain or shared interest, the group must engage and interact with one another, and the members must be practitioners (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). “Members of a community are informally bound by what they do together—from participating in lunch-time discussions to solving difficult problems—and by what they have learned through their mutual engagement in these activities” (Wenger, 2017, Defining Communities of Practice section, para. 2). Teachers stay in the profession when they are members of a professional learning community. These interpersonal relationships, founded on trust and mutual respect, make teachers feel valued. Collaboration and collegial interchange must become the norm, not the exception in schools (Wong, 2004).

These things performed on the micro level year-after-year to help individual teachers, lead to achieving the long-term macro goal of school improvement and closing the achievement gap. The is greater potential for school improvement when teachers view it as a collective enterprise because teachers are more likely to adopt new instructional strategies, that lead to higher student achievement and learning, when they are in the presence of effective peers (Haynes, 2014). As explained and supported above, the theories incorporated in this study are intertwined and demonstrate that communities of practice and excellent mentoring are both aspects of a quality induction program (Moir, 2009). When novice teachers have a quality mentor to guide them through their zones of development and assist them with on the job learning, and they belong to a community of practice, the school can reach its macro goal of improved student learning for all students.
**Historical Perspective**

Mentoring and induction programs have been around since the early 1980s in the United States. In the 1980s, researchers began investigating the needs and concerns of new teachers and using the findings to design induction programs for beginning teachers (Joerger & Bremer, 2001). These programs were intended to reduce teacher turnover, improve student achievement, and help new teachers adjust to being a teacher. During this time, the state of Florida began to take a more aggressive approach in providing support to new teachers; as part of this approach, they required that teachers go through some form of induction plan to obtain certification (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

A school staffing survey from the 1993-1994 school year given by Learning Forward, formerly known as National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future (NCTAF), found that 55% of teachers with fewer than five years of teaching experience received some type of formal induction support their first year of teaching; however, only 16% of teachers with more than 10 years of experience were a part of an induction program their first year in the classroom (Pan & Mutchler, 2000). In 1997, the Palavin Research Institute, which is now known as the American Institutes for Research, in Washington, DC, found that 21 states in the United States had an induction program, and five states were either piloting or planning one. Still, at that time only 50% of new teachers received more than a single orientation day prior to the start of the school year (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). These earliest induction programs in the United States focused on assisting and assessing new teachers, but the primary focus was on assessing them and helping them meet the requirements for certification in their
respective states; by 1998, some of these programs had begun to move toward providing new teachers with more feedback and professional support (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

In the early 2000s, induction programs began receiving a considerable amount of attention for their potential to help retain teachers and enhance student performance (Joerger & Bremer, 2001). A new teacher’s development begins in pre-service programs where they study theories about teaching and education. When they transition from pre-service into a new teacher induction program, they must adjust from studying about teaching to knowing how to teach (Goldrick, 2009). In 2004, Ingersoll and Smith explained that induction programs should be designed for teachers who have already gone through an initial training program and should act as a walkway between being a student in a classroom learning how to teach to being a teacher of students. However, in more recent years, changes have been made to this process due to the number of teachers entering the field from an alternate route to certification (Joerger & Bremer, 2001). In 2016, 18% of new teachers entered the profession through a non-traditional or alternative certification route (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018). Many of these teachers enter the classroom and are put into teacher training programs simultaneously; for example, in South Carolina, to qualify for the Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE) a teacher must be employed in a public school (South Carolina Department of Education, 2019). As a result, schools must also design induction programs to support teachers who do not have prior teacher training.

In 2012, it was recognized globally that mentoring is important and must be emphasized by schools to help new teachers experience success and remain in the
profession (Kent et al., 2012). In 2012, New Teacher Center found that there were more beginning teachers in schools than in the previous two decades. In 1987-1988, the average teacher had 15 years of experience; in 2007-2008, the average teacher was a first-year teacher. In 2016, the most current data revealed that one in five teachers was in his or her first three years of teaching. Although a high number of teachers today are beginning teachers, more new teachers are staying on the job longer, and NTC credits this to states’ and districts’ starting to create better teacher induction programs that address the national teacher shortage crisis (Goldrick, 2016).

While there has been some progress, there is still a long way to go (Goldrick, 2016; Kearney, 2012;). Even though these programs have received a great deal of attention and been the focus of numerous research studies, there is very limited agreement on what constitutes an effective induction program (Kearney, 2014). Induction programs in the United States do not have guidelines or well-defined goals, many of them are informal, and each state determines its own standards (Kent et al., 2012). On a survey conducted by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2014, only 24% of teachers reported weekly mentoring activities (The University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning et al., 2016). In 2012, 27 states required some form of support for beginning teachers. In 2016, the most recent data, 29 states require some form of support for beginning teachers (Goldrick, 2016). Of the 29 states requiring support for new teachers, three of those states had no minimum requirement, 11 states required induction for only the first year, six required a two-year induction program, and nine states required an induction program for more than two years; 21 states required no support at all (Goldrick, 2016).
New Teacher Center found that “few states have comprehensive policies to require high-quality induction for beginning teachers” (Goldrick, 2016, p. iii). Teachers are still not receiving the support they need to be successful in the classroom (The University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning, Learning Forward, & Public Impact, 2016) and states have only made limited progress over the past several years (Goldrick, 2016). Three states, including Iowa, Delaware, and Connecticut, meet the New Teacher Center’s guidelines for high quality induction programs (Goldrick, 2016).

Teacher turnover and quality are not new concerns for those in the field of education. In the 20 years between 1988 and 2008, 41% of teachers decided to leave the profession. This number includes teachers who retired, but it is estimated that between 23% and 42% of teachers quit within their first five years (Greenberg et al., 2016). “Simply put, high-quality induction programs are needed more than ever” (Goldrick, 2016, p. ii).

**The Effects of Turnover on Schools**

Even with all the research that has been conducted on how to create effective induction programs and how important they are to student achievement, data reveals that new teachers’ needs are still are not being met because they are not receiving the support they need to be successful (Kearney, 2014). Because teachers are not getting the support they need, early attrition has continued to be high among a growing number of novice teachers, (Ingersoll et al., 2018) and this attrition leads to a decrease in funds availability, instability in schools, and poorer outcomes for schools that experience high teacher turnover (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). High teacher turnover also factors into the “long-term destabilization of low-income neighborhood schools which lose continuity in
relationships between teachers, students, parents and community” (Greenberg et al., 2016, p. 6). Schools in urban districts are the hardest hit by teacher attrition and students in these districts are 10 times more likely to be served by an unqualified teacher (Moir, 2003). These high teacher attrition rates increase inequity in access to education (Greenberg et al., 2016).

In lieu of leaving the profession all together, some beginning teachers choose to move to another school or district at the end of the year, and even though these teachers are not leaving the profession all together, the instability this creates has a negative impact on teacher morale and student achievement in the schools teachers are choosing to leave (Haynes, 2014; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Watt & Richardson, 2011). Teachers in hard-to-staff schools lack access to excellent mentors and have fewer chances to collaborate with experienced teachers (Johnson et al., 2004); morale and work environment suffer as these schools become known as places to leave (Haynes, 2014). In addition, to the negative impact on morale, high turnover has a negative impact on organizational stability and coherence (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Similar to teachers who choose to leave, movers are also strongly influenced by the amount of support they feel they receive from the school. These factors include having a well-matched mentor, valuable induction programs, and curriculum guidance (Johnson et al., 2004).

When teachers leave the profession, school leaders must replace them to meet class-size requirements; many times, especially in urban cities, new hires do not have proper training (Moir, 2003). These new teachers find themselves in the most challenging situations, making them more likely to leave and less likely to have a positive impact on student achievement (Bruno et al., 2019). Therefore, students who are the most at risk are
placed in classrooms with teachers who have the least amount of experience and are unable to cope with the students’ needs (Moir, 2003). Many of these new teachers enter the profession and leave because they do not get the support or feedback that is necessary to become an effective teacher (Sun, 2012). New teachers need around three to five years of teaching experience before they are able to maximize student growth and achievement; unfortunately, many teachers leave before they have a chance to reach their full potential (Sun, 2012). Consequently, students, especially those in the most challenging schools, will have less access to high-quality instruction (Sun, 2012).

**Induction Programs’ Impact on Student Achievement**

Middle and high school subject area teachers have seen an increase in class sizes and workload (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Schools with the most difficult and challenging classrooms are more likely to be filled with low-income and minority students; these students are the most in need of highly effective teachers but are the least likely to have one afforded to them (Goldrick, 2009). As a result, students in these schools are at an extreme disadvantage because they lack access to an equitable education; although, “a series of superior teachers can overcome the learning deficits between low-income students and their more advantaged peers; likewise, the residual effects of having ineffective teachers over multiple years are devastating” (Nye et al., 2004, p. 247). This inequity in instruction must be addressed because research reveals that teacher quality has the greatest influence on positive student growth and achievement, and induction programs can help address this because “knowledgeable and skilled teachers increase student learning, and mentoring is one strategy to improve the performance of both teachers and their learners” (American Institutes for Research, 2015a, p. 3). Urban
schools employ a higher number of beginning teachers and also have higher turnover rates, which makes closing the achievement gap even more difficult (Goldrick, 2009). The achievement gap cannot be closed until all students have access to high quality instruction provided by experienced, high quality teachers (Moir, 2003). Students of teachers supported by an effective mentor, show test score gains similar to those students taught by an experienced teacher (Moir, 2003).

Organizational interventions such as teacher induction and mentoring programs have been found to help reduce attrition rates, help increase teacher satisfaction, improve instructional practices, and increase student scores on achievement tests (Greenberg et al., 2016). By increasing teacher effectiveness, schools can directly increase student learning and improve student outcomes (American Institutes for Research, 2015).

The researcher sees the potential that is created by investing in teachers. The researcher understands that for schools across the nation to attain the goal of having all students graduate high school and be college and career ready, schools must do a better job of retaining and developing teachers (Sun, 2012). The researcher chose to address this issue due to the teacher turnover rate in her school and students’ performance on state mandated tests. A mentor can help and support beginning teachers so they can provide quality instruction to students and help them meet their goals of employment, postsecondary education, and community engagement (American Institutes for Research, 2015a). This is a goal of Eagle Valley High School and the entire school district in which it is located. “It has been noted that students with lower ability tend to be the first students to increase achievement when teachers receive training and are educated on best practices” (American Institutes for Research, 2015a, p. 8). A high-quality induction
program can lead to accelerated teacher effectiveness, increased professional growth, improvement in student learning, and lower attrition rates (Sun, 2012). Supporting and retaining teachers, specifically beginning teachers, is crucial for school operations, and student learning and achievement (Bruno et al., 2019).

Related Research

The first study the researcher felt was important to include was done by Paul Bruno, Sarah Rabovsky, and Katharine Strunk. They published results from a study on new teacher working conditions in January 2019; the study was supported by the National Center for the Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) along with the American Institutes for Research and multiple universities. The study was based on 10 years of administrative and survey data from teachers and administrators from 808 schools in a Los Angeles school district. The researchers used the data to generate quantitative measurements. The researchers compared first year teaching assignments to veteran teachers’ assignments to see if novice teachers’ initial working conditions and school contexts are more difficult than their colleagues with more experience. Researchers studied characteristics of a teacher’s environment to determine the effects of each one on whether a teacher chose to stay at his or her school, move to a different school, or leave the profession altogether. Findings of the study revealed that new teachers have considerably higher overall instructional loads than teachers with six or more years of teaching experience; and first year teachers have the most challenging workloads of all regarding student achievement and discipline records. They found that teachers are less likely to leave a school where they are demographically similar to students and their colleagues and that typically professional learning communities are not
as strong for newer teachers because they work with less experienced administrators and teachers. The overall finding of the study was that the characteristics studied impact beginning teacher development and retention, and that features of teachers’ placements play a role in determining whether they stay, move, or leave the profession. These findings are of interest to those in educational leadership positions concerned with teacher development and retention; they suggest that those who determine new teacher placement not assume one placement is more desirable than another because in addition to collaboration and support from more experienced teachers, other factors also play a role in determining how satisfied a new teacher is with his or her job (Bruno et al., 2019).

This study suggests that a comprehensive induction program with collaboration among effective peers is important, but student factors and other elements of a new teacher’s experience may also play a role in determining whether a teacher stays, moves, or leave.

The second study highlighted in this literature review was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and done by Steven Glazerman, Eric Isenberg, Sarah Dolfin, Martha Bleeker, Amy Johnson, Mary Grider and Matthew Jacobus in 2010. This study was important to include due to the significant impact induction was found to have on student achievement. The study was large in scale because it was conducted in 17 different school districts in 13 different states, 418 schools were included and 1,009 teachers. The purpose of the study was to determine if expanding a district’s typical induction services to a more comprehensive induction program would improve both student and teacher results and provide scientific evidence to Congress and education agencies that could be used to make decisions about induction programs. This study was a randomized experiment. In each district, schools were randomly chosen to be in either
the treatment group or the control group; new teachers in the treatment group were given a comprehensive induction program, and new teachers in the control group only received the district’s typical “informal or low-intensity” induction services. Teachers in the treatment group were given a full-time mentor, opportunities for monthly professional development, and time to observe veteran teachers. Of the 17 participating districts, 10 only offered services for one year; the other seven districts offered services to their treatment schools for two years. The researchers examined the effects of the induction program teachers participated in on student achievement, teacher satisfaction, preparedness, retention, and workforce composition. The researchers found no statistically significant difference between teachers who received no induction support and those that received only one year of comprehensive support. The teachers who were in the treatment group showed improved classroom practices and student achievement as reflected in standardized test scores after completion of the two-year induction program. Students who had a teacher that received two years of comprehensive induction support showed significantly greater gains in both math and reading than students who had a teacher that received less intensive support. Findings suggest that being in a comprehensive induction program for two years instead of the district’s typical induction program, moved students in the 50th percentile up four percentile points in reading and eight percentile points in math. The positive results in student achievement seen from comprehensive mentoring were not seen until a teacher’s third year of teaching. The findings from this study on teacher impacts show that teachers who participated in the comprehensive induction program did not report feeling more prepared than teachers who were in the control group. Another finding was that a comprehensive mentoring program
did not appear to significantly influence overall teacher retention. However, these findings can be misleading as the goal for the study was not to retain 100% of teachers, but to retain high-quality teachers (Glazerman et al., 2010). The researchers hypothesized that comprehensive teacher induction may help teachers improve their practice and “improve the mix of teachers by retaining strong teachers encouraging weaker teachers to leave” (Glazerman et al., 2010, p. 112). However, “taken together, the findings on composition effects suggest that comprehensive teacher induction did not significantly improve teacher quality” (Glazerman et al., 2010, p. 115).

The third piece of related research in this literature review was conducted in 2018 by Jamie Segraves. Seagraves’ qualitative research explored “the experiences of newly-hired faculty members… to…better understand…the influence that a comprehensive induction program has on their experience as newly-hired faculty members” (Segraves, 2018, p. 8). There were 23 participants from four schools, including six administrators and 17 teachers new to their schools (Segraves, 2018). Segraves (2018) found that a supportive and collaborative school culture where teachers felt comfortable seeking help from colleagues and administrators lead to general job satisfaction among teachers. However, a limitation from the study was that Segraves could not determine if induction was the reason for this or the general school culture. Administrator participants felt the most important aspect of a comprehensive induction program is making sure teachers have access to what they need, and felt that a mentor is the most important component; however, teacher participants responded differently depending on the type of mentor they were provided with, teachers who had a mentor from the same subject area responded more favorably. Overall, teachers seemed appreciative of the school’s induction program
and feeling supported by colleagues and administrators. The author made several recommendations, but the two overreaching recommendations to help with teachers’ experiences at a school and retention are that schools should create a supportive and collaborative environment for all faculty members and allow time during paid hours for collaboration to take place. Further suggestions are that schools should limit what teachers are asked to do outside of contract hours during the summer and offer paid childcare for those in need, administrators should be available to offer support and meet with teachers individually as needed, allow protected time for collaboration, provide valuable feedback from observations, permit time for peer observations, and administrators should give constructive feedback. In addition, schools should determine its goals for its mentoring program, ensure that enough money and time are allocated to reach the programs goals, schools should carefully consider mentorship pairings, and make sure that both the mentor and mentee has a chance to evaluate and give feedback on the program (Segraves, 2018).

The fourth study included in this review was done by well-known researcher, Richard Ingersoll. Richard Ingersoll did a series of research projects to determine how widespread induction programs are in America and what kind of activities, supports, and components induction programs typically include. In addition, he wanted to determine the impact receiving these supports had on teachers and students (Ingersoll, 2012). Ingersoll completed the series of studies with Tom Smith, Michael Strong, and Lisa Merrill.

To determine changes and trends in the demographics of the national teaching force, the researchers used a national data set to track changes over recent decades. The
researchers also analyzed the quality and how widespread induction programs are and whether they increased over a 10-year period (Ingersoll, 2012). The researchers collected quantitative data to conduct their “own statistical analysis of how participating in these programs affects the retention of beginning teachers” (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 48). The researchers also reviewed studies that were done prior to their researcher that evaluated the effectiveness of induction programs on both teachers and students. The researchers looked at 15 empirical studies to collect data. Prior to the study, the “graying trend” in the teaching force was blamed for the teacher shortage. Ingersoll and his team found three larger and less known reasons for the teacher shortage and the changing demographics of the teaching work force. The changes they found, have strong implications for induction programs (Ingersoll, 2012).

First, the researchers found a ballooning trend in the teaching work force, this ballooning led to a greening effect which actually meant that the average teacher was no longer a veteran teacher, but a teacher with less than five years of teaching experience (Ingersoll, 2012). They also discovered that “teacher attrition…is especially high in the first years on the job” (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 49) and in the past two decades teacher attrition rates for first year teachers increased by one third (Ingersoll, 2012). This means there are more novice teachers in the teaching force, and they are more likely to leave the profession, meaning the “number and instability of beginning teachers have been increasing in recent years” (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 49).

New teachers reported that a lack of support is the primary reason they leave the profession (Ingersoll as cited in Ingersoll, 2012); therefore, the researchers also sought to determine if participating in an induction program slowed the attrition rate of beginning
teachers. The researchers did find a link between participating in a mentoring program and teacher retention. The two factors that had the greatest influence on teacher retention were having a mentor who taught the same subject and having time to collaborate with other teachers. Ultimately, it was determined that induction helps with teacher retention, but it depends on how much support one gets, and the more comprehensive programs lead to better teacher retention. While studying the effects of induction programs, the researchers found a few mixed and contradictory findings, however, the results mostly showed the consensus that induction programs have a positive effect on new teachers’ job satisfaction, commitment, and retention. Research also shows induction programs have a positive impact on teachers’ ability to keep students on task, develop workable lesson plans, use effective student questioning practices, adjust classroom activities to meet students’ interests, maintain positive classroom atmosphere, and demonstrate successful classroom management. Finally, research studies also reveal that students of novice teachers who partook in an induction program had higher scores, or gains, on academic achievement tests (Ingersoll, 2012).

The American Associate for School Administrators published the fifth study included in this review and it was conducted by Joshua and Wayne Alexander in 2019. The purpose of the study was to determine if new teachers wanted to be a part of a mentoring program, and how new teachers perceived the mentoring programs they are put into. In addition, the study sought to determine how principals felt about mentoring programs and gather their thoughts on qualities that a successful mentoring program should have. The study was qualitative, and based on the findings, the authors make six suggestions for effective mentoring programs. The first suggestion is that a mentoring
program should be in place prior to the start of the school year, and mentors and novice teachers should establish goals for the year at the first meeting. For mentors and novice teachers to take the program seriously, administration should advocate for the program. The second suggestion is that novice teachers need emotional support; the principal should provide the novice teacher with formal, official support when warranted, and the mentor should be able and willing to provide the beginning teacher with advice, guidance, and emotional support. The third suggestion is for school districts to have a mentoring program that is standard in all schools within its jurisdiction to help teachers who may be transferred within the school district their second or third year. In addition, school districts should offer professional development throughout the first three years for new mentor teachers and novice teachers. The fourth suggestion is for school administration to set up a schedule for new teachers to observe successful veteran teachers, and for novice teachers to be observed and receive feedback from their peers and administration. The fifth suggestion made is for extra time to be allocated to new teachers to observe, plan, and receive feedback. The final suggestion is for new teachers to be placed into a support group to discuss the trials and tribulations of the job (Alexander & Alexander, 2019).

The sixth study included in this review was conducted by well-known researcher Richard Ingersoll along with Thomas Smith. In 2004, Richard Ingersoll and Thomas Smith conducted a study to determine if induction programs and the supports they offer to new teachers had a positive effect on the retention of beginning teachers. The study specifically looked to determine if supports like mentoring programs, collective group activities, extra resources, and reduced workloads reduce teacher attrition (Ingersoll &
Smith, 2004). When this study was completed, it was of monumental importance because “in contrast to the industrial and corporate sectors, there [had] been virtually no work done on this [turnover] issue in education” (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004, p. 31). The researchers wanted to address gaps in the research that had been done on induction programs, the gaps they wanted to address included: no control groups of non-mentored teachers to compare with data from teachers who had been mentored, studies that were done prior did not control for other factors that could have accounted for the outcomes of induction, studies only noted teachers’ attitudes and not retention rates or measures of teacher effectives, and a number of studies only focused on one type of program. The researchers used nationally representative data from the National Center for Education Statistics that was collected by the U.S. Census Bureau to study how widespread induction programs were in the country and whether the data was showing an increase in the number of teachers receiving induction supports. The sample size included 52,000 elementary and secondary teachers. They used the data to determine the types of activities, supports, and components the induction programs typically included and the effects that receiving the supports had on the retention rates of the teachers that received the supports. The findings from this study indicate that new teachers who were given multiple supports, were less likely to leave the occupation or move to another school or district after their first year (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

Not all forms of assistance and support, increased beginners’ retention. Forms of assistance that had the strongest effect on teacher retention were having a mentor from the same field, common planning with teachers from the same department, and scheduled collaboration time with colleagues, and being a part of a network of teachers. This
suggests that there is a link between receiving support through mentoring and induction and the likelihood of turnover and getting multiple induction supports has a strong and statistically significant effect on teacher retention (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

The seventh and final study included in this review was done by Lisa Paris. In 2013, Lisa Paris conducted a study to determine the effects of a mentoring program on eleven first-year teachers and to test two hypotheses; the first was to determine if the relationships established by mentoring during pre-service education would be sufficient to sustain the mentoring relationship into the induction phase and help the mentee successfully navigate the transition. In addition, the researcher wanted to determine if the mentoring relationships would help improve the retention rates of beginning teachers. The methods used to collect data were observations, beginning teachers’ logbooks, initial surveys, evaluative surveys, qualitative interviews, questionnaires, and email communications. Paris found that all of the beginning teacher participants were still in the profession. The researchers also determined that the relationships formed through mentoring had a positive impact on the beginning teachers. In addition, the support received by the beginning teachers from their mentors helped them transition into and successfully navigate through their first year of teaching (Paris, 2013). From her findings, Paris suggests that “new mentoring approaches are crucial to meeting the needs of 21st century beginning teachers and sustaining mentor supply” (Paris, 2013, p. 156).

**Summary**

The researcher wanted to address the lack of support for beginning teachers and the problems created by instability through a more sufficient and comprehensive induction program in her school because literature reveals how important the induction
phase is for new teachers. The induction phase and the new teacher’s experiences throughout play a major role in whether the educator stays in the profession or chooses to leave (Goldrick, 2009). Principals and school administrators play a vital role in the mentoring process; they design and oversee the mentoring program within the school, and give feedback, guidance, and support to novice teachers (Alexander & Alexander, 2019).

According to Mekos and Smith (2018), the support new teachers receive falls into one of four categories on a continuum of support: No support, Compliance-Driven support, Problem-Driven support, or People-Driven support. For induction programs to be successful, they must provide beginning teachers with the emotional and instructional support needed to acculturate into the profession. The goal of all programs should be to move toward People-Driven support, which is when mentors bring novice teachers into communities of practice and the program focuses on the growth of both the novice and the mentor teachers (Mekos & Smith 2018). The focus of this research study is on the positive effects comprehensive mentoring has on beginning teachers when implemented with fidelity. The training and support teachers receive are important because they will govern the success of a whole generation of students (Wong, 2004). Teachers, especially new teachers, need support, direction, and actionable feedback on how to improve so they feel like they are making a positive impact on their students (Moir, 2018). The researcher hopes to provide these necessities to new teachers through an improved induction program with dedicated mentors at her school. New teachers should be provided with the support needed to help students succeed. Over the course of the past 20 years, copious studies have been completed on many different types of programs. Several of these
studies provide support for the theory that well-conceived and well-implemented teacher mentoring and induction programs do lead to increased job satisfaction, efficacy, and retention of new teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

Based on the literature and findings from prior studies, the researcher selected interventions that may improve the quality of the mentoring program at her school. To provide teachers with a community of practice, beginning teachers were paired with a mentor teacher and each pairing was also assigned to a cohort group to act as a support group. The researcher eliminated extra duties for first-year induction teachers and created a duty of observing experienced veteran practitioners for true first-year teachers. To create time for feedback, the researcher also eliminated mentor’s extra duties such as supervising the hallways and lunches and established the expectation that mentors would use this 30 minutes for mentoring activities. The intervention of removing other duties from mentor teachers, provided mentors with more time to participate in activities with beginning teachers and help guide them through the ZPD. In addition, the study conducted by Glazerman et al. showed the importance of providing induction services for more than one year (Glazerman et al., 2010) to beginning teachers and supports the extension of the mentoring program at EVHS past one year and the researcher’s decision to include more supports for new teachers. As revealed, the theories tied to this study are well articulated in the literature, and the interventions used to address the problem of practice.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

There was a great need for this study to be conducted because teachers are not receiving adequate support and due to this need not being met, teachers are leaving the profession altogether or moving from one school or district to a different school or district creating instability for students (Haynes, 2014; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Mekos & Smith, 2018; Watt & Richardson, 2011). It has been estimated that up to fifty percent of teachers exit the profession during their first five years in the classroom and half of the replacements hired are also likely to leave; this pattern creates a major disruption to the lives of students (Gatens, 2014). “Turnover also severs the relationships formed between teachers and their students, as well as parents and guardians. As a result, the child's academic support system is weakened” (Redding, 2018, Disruptions to Learning section, para. 1). Little research has been done on mentoring new teachers as part of a cohort instead of a one-on-one traditional mentor/mentee relationship. This study was conducted in a high school setting. The high school used in this study is being referred to by the pseudonym Eagle Valley High School, or EVHS.

Problem of Practice

The problem of practice for this study is addressing the need to provide more support to beginning teachers through the use of a more comprehensive induction program. Developing an induction program that will increase teacher quality and
retention is vital to a school’s success. Mentors impact new teachers in ways that no amount of training can (Moir, 2003). Therefore, the mentoring piece of an induction program is critical to the foundational strength of the induction program and the school.

**Research Questions**

This action research study used a mixed-methods case study approach to answer one main research question and two sub research questions. The questions were:

1. What impact does involvement in a comprehensive mentoring program for beginning teachers have on participants?
   a. How does using a cohort model of mentoring impact overall teacher satisfaction?
   b. How did teacher perceptions of the newly implemented program change over the course of the academic school year?
   c. How does involvement in a comprehensive induction program increase the retention rate of beginning teachers at Eagle Valley High School?

**Purpose of the Study**

The central purpose of this study was to determine how to develop a comprehensive induction program to better support the emotional and instructional growth of beginning teachers to lead to improved teacher retention and quality. Studies confirm that increasing support for beginning teachers through mentoring and induction programs may raise retention and advance the quality of instruction (Woods, 2016). The researcher wanted to discover how modifying the induction program to be a comprehensive, team approach would affect the value of the program and if it could be used to increase teacher satisfaction and ultimately retention within her school.
Design

Due to the researcher’s positionality as a practitioner, action research was used for this study. Action research is an organized investigation of a problem conducted by a practitioner who has a vested interest in the setting, problem, and solution (Mills, 2018). Action research is unique because participants can be in control of the research or they can be involved in designing the methodology of the research (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The use of action research was valid because this type of research yields more information for the researcher that is both directly and immediately applicable (Mertler, 2014). Therefore, action research allows the researcher to quickly improve the practices within his or her school or classroom. Action research produces the data needed to make critical decisions that center around meeting an organization’s goals (Effron & Ravid, 2013). This action research case study used a mixed methods approach.

“If the unit of analysis is a bounded system—a case, such as a person, a program, or event— one would label such a study, a… case study” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). This study was a mixed methods case study focused on understanding the induction program and its impact on teacher satisfaction and ability at EVHS. The number of participants was limited to the number of new and mentor teachers at EVHS; therefore, the system was intrinsically bounded. If the object of study is intrinsically bounded, it is a case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The study was focused on understanding one thing, which was the mentoring program and its impact on teachers. A mixed methods case study was the most appropriate method for this research because “case study research has grown in reputation as an effective methodology to investigate and understand complex issues in real world settings” (Harrison et al., 2017, Introduction section, para.1). A case
study was an effective approach to this research because it was important to understand participants’ lived experiences to improve them. Sociologists and anthropologists have used the case study to investigate peoples’ lives, experiences, and how they understand the social and cultural context of their world with the goal of understanding how individuals interpret and attribute meaning to their experiences (Johansson & Simons as cited in Harrison et al., 2017).

In a case study, data typically comes from: interviews, field observations, and documents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and all these sources in addition to surveys were utilized in this study. Because the data in a case study can be scattered and contradictory (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), the researcher continuously collected data and analysis was an ongoing process; the data was brought together in a case study database and organized by codes so that it was easy to access. Data came from interim surveys on teacher satisfaction with the program, duty logs from first year and mentor teachers on how they were using their extra time, surveys sent after professional developments, observation logs of cohort group lunches, and data collected from semi-structured interviews.

This study had a convergent design. The qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously, and the intent of the design was to be able to explore and explain a phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In this case study, the convergent, mixed methods approach ensured that qualitative and quantitative data were available to assess the trustworthiness of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While the study relied more heavily on qualitative data collected through surveys, interviews, and observations, quantitative data was also a valuable assessment of people’s feelings toward the program. Quantitative data was collected with Likert scale questions that
measured the degree to which teachers agree and disagree with components of the program. In addition, the teacher retention rate at the end of the school year will also help quantify the new program’s degree of success.

**Context of the Study**

For ambiguity, the school where the research was conducted will be referred to as Eagle Valley High School. The school is located in the southeastern United States and is part of a public-school district, and at the time of the study, was classified as an AAAAA high school. In the region where the school is located, 5A is the largest classification for a school. The school serves students in grades nine through 12 in a growing rural community. According to the 45-day headcount on the state department of education’s website and the district’s enrollment data, 10.9% of students had limited English proficiency, and the student body makeup at the time the study occurred was: 1% Asian, 38% African American, 14% Hispanic, 45% Caucasian, and 2% other (South Carolina Department of Education, 2019a). In addition, 74% of the district’s student body lived in poverty (South Carolina Department of Education, 2019b). Living in poverty was 59% of the student body of EVHS (South Carolina Department of Education, 2019b). In 2017-2018, EVHS’s graduation rate was 85.9% and above the state average of 81% (South Carolina Department of Education, 2019c). However, the school and the district were lower than the state average on the state end of course examinations in every subject administered which included: English 1, Algebra 1, United States History, and Biology 1.

At the time the study was conducted, there were approximately 1600 students enrolled in the school, and eighty-three certified staff were employed by the school. Certified staff included teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators. The majority
of certified staff, 76%, had more than five years of experience. The fewest percentage of teachers, 5%, were first year teachers, and a slightly higher percentage of teachers, 18%, had two to four years of experience. The vacancies created at the school were typically not due to teachers retiring.

At Eagle Valley High School, which is a pseudonym being used in place of the research site’s actual name to protect the identity of participants, growing class sizes, extra duties, and a loss of planning time to teach extra classes were common solutions to the problems a teacher deficit creates. This was bad for both teachers and students. These solutions add to the stress of classroom teachers and especially for teachers new to the profession. Therefore, it was imperative to determine how to best support beginning teachers to prevent them from becoming a mover or a leaver. Due to the school district being located near larger cities with more attractions and amenities, it is hard to draw young teachers away from the larger cities which escalates the necessity to retain the teachers that choose to come to the district.

The participants in the study included teachers who were a part of the school’s induction program during the 2019-2020 school year. The participants included 18 beginning teachers and 13 mentor teachers for a total of 31 teacher participants. The breakdown of beginning teachers included: four Induction I contract teachers who were brand new in the classroom; three Induction II contract teachers who were technically in their second year of teacher but were still classified as induction due to paperwork issues forcing them to repeat the induction level contract. There were six Annual I level contract teachers, who were going through their formal summative evaluation process. Of the Annual I teachers, three were in their second year of teaching. Three of the Annual I level
teachers were in their third year of teaching; this happens when a teacher must repeat induction and has to hold an Induction II contract for a year. There were five first-year continuing contract teachers. These teachers are typically third year teachers, but when a teacher must repeat an induction or annual contract, it could mean a first-year continuing contract teacher has more than three years of experience. In this study, three of the First Year Continuing Contract teachers had three years of experience and two had four years of experience. In some circumstances, other factors can influence how years of experience correlate with contract level.

Formative data gathered throughout the study contributed to the catalytic and democratic validity of the study. According to Herr & Anderson (2015), catalytic validity is “knowing reality in order to transform it” (p. 69). The collaboration between the researcher and the participants helped the researcher understand the participants' perceptions of the program and how it could be improved to better meet their needs.

“Democratic validity refers to the extent to which research is done in collaboration with all parties who have a stake in the problem under investigation” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 69). Surveys given at various points throughout the study ensured that other stakeholders had a voice in the changes being made to the program. The teachers’ input on this was also important because action research should be done in collaboration with the people who are affected by the situation to be changed (Effron & Ravid, 2013). Other stakeholders’ input also contributed to the trustworthiness and validity of the action plan and subsequent findings. “In qualitative studies, which are essentially subjective and focused on participants’ perspectives, validity refers to the extent to which data reflects participants’ views of the issue being explored” (Effron & Ravid, 2013, p. 70).
Historical Context for EVHS

At the end of the 2017-2018 school year, 22.67% of classroom teachers left EVHS. Of those teachers, 10.67% were movers, 2.67% were promoted, 4% retired, and 6.67% were leavers. At EVHS, 9.09% of induction teachers left. In the district, 12.5% of induction teachers left. At the end of the 2018-2019 school year, EVHS lost 14 (19.4%) classroom teachers. Of those teachers, 15.2% were movers, 1.4% was a leaver, 1.4% was promoted, and 1.4% retired. Two (2.7%) of those staff members were induction teachers; seven (9.7%) were trained mentors, and of the five remaining teachers that left, four (5.5%) had less than five years of teaching experience. One of the induction teachers was a leaver, who decided to leave to pursue other options and graduate school. When asked, all the teachers stated they were leaving for personal reasons. The reasons included: higher pay in other districts, moving closer to home for a shorter commute, or moving to be closer to family.

There was also one vacant math position for two school years. Due to the shortage, teachers were asked to teach extra classes. During the 2017-2018 school year, one Spanish teacher taught four blocks, and during two of those blocks, he taught concurrent classes. This was sustained using an aide and technology. In the spring semester, this teacher taught 118 students. The other Spanish teacher, who at that time was a first-year teacher, taught four blocks. In addition to these two teachers, teachers in other content areas were also asked to teach additional classes. During the 2018-2019 school year, seven teachers each had to teach an extra block during the fall semester, and nine teachers were each asked to teach an extra block second semester. In the 2019-2020 school year, 13 teachers were each asked to teach an extra block in the fall and 14
teachers were each asked to teach an extra block in the spring. Teachers were paid for teaching an extra block, so some volunteered and appreciated the opportunity. However, not every teacher asked to supplement for the shortage was willing to do so and some did it to be helpful even though it was a burden for them. This data is relevant because it was collected the two years prior to implementing the new induction program at EVHS in 2019-2020 and provides two years’ worth of baseline data to compare to the data collected at the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

“The goal of any educational effort is to ultimately help students learn and prepare them for life beyond the classroom” (New Teacher Center, 2018, para. 4). High-quality teachers and their longevity benefit the school and students by assisting educators in fulfilling the goal of student growth and preparing students to participate fully in a democratic society. Students with high-performing teachers generate five to six months more growth each year than students with low-performing teachers (TNTP, 2012). By implementing a successful induction program that supports and retains quality teachers, students will be the ultimate beneficiary. The New Teacher Center conducted a study after receiving a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The study revealed that students gain up to five additional months of learning when their teachers received high-quality mentoring (New Teacher Center, 2018), supporting the theory that a comprehensive induction program can meet teachers’ needs by helping them develop and become high-quality instructors. These two studies conducted six years apart, agree that students who have access to a high-quality teacher can gain five to six additional months of growth during a school year than those who do not have access to a high-quality teacher.
Participants

The sampling method was non-probability, purposive sampling, which is the most common type of non-probability sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In purposeful sampling, participants are chosen based on whom the researcher can learn the most from because it leads to an in-depth understanding about the issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, the issue of central importance was how well the induction program was supporting the teachers involved.

To be selected as a participant, teachers had to either be a certified mentor teacher who was actively mentoring a beginning teacher, or they had to be a new teacher with a contract level of Induction I, Induction II, Annual I, or First Year Continuing. Teachers who are categorized as Induction I are first-year teachers. Teachers who are categorized as Induction II are second year teachers who did not meet all the requirements to move from Induction I. Teachers who are considered Annual I are typically second year teachers, but some are third year teachers who fell into the previously mentioned category of Induction II. Teachers on an Annual I contract go through a formal, summative evaluation. Teachers on a First-Year Continuing contract are typically teachers in their third year of teaching.

The sample includes 13 mentor teachers and 18 beginning teachers. The breakdown of beginning teachers is: four Induction I teachers, three Induction II teachers, who were placed on Induction II due to paperwork issues, six Annual I teachers, and five First-Year Continuing contract teachers. Mentors’ years of teaching experience vary from seven years to 29 years. To properly assess the value of the changes, it was important for participants to have a current perspective on the mentoring program. Of the 13 mentor
participants, all but two had experience with the old mentoring program, and 14 of the beginning teacher participants had experience with the old mentoring program at EVHS or another school. Each of the chosen participants were selected they had the “potential…to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 127). Teachers who were a part of the program during the 2018-2019 school year and were a part of it again during the 2019-2020 school year, were best able to compare the program before the changes were implement and after they were implemented. This study was well suited for action research because of the collaboration between the researcher and those who had a stake in the problem being addressed (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Participants gave feedback as the study progressed to fine tune and make adjustments to better the system as the year progressed. This is important because “action research demands some form of intervention” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 5). Interventions were made to the program after surveys were competed at each interim.

Table 3.1 Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Male/Female</th>
<th>Demographic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Teachers: Participants 1-18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Induction I</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Induction I</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Induction I</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Induction I</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Induction II</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Induction II</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Induction II</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Annual I</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Annual I</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Annual I</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Annual I</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prior to the 2019-2020 school year, teachers were only assigned a mentor if they were classified as Induction I or Induction II. Mentors were chosen based on content area, subjects taught within the content area, and/or gender. Mentor teachers were paid $400.00 to mentor one induction teacher. Mentors and mentees had a one-on-one relationship.

To create a more scaffolded induction program where teachers received support past their first year of teaching, the researcher had to seek approval for funding from the district office to extend the program beyond the induction year(s). Funds were approved
to extend the program and provide mentor teachers to beginning teachers classified as annual and going through their formal evaluation as well as teachers who were on their first year of a continuing contract. This change means the typical teacher will be mentored in years one, two and, three. During the 2019-2020 year of implementation, mentor teachers were still paid $400.00 to mentor a teacher with an induction level contract, and $300.00 to mentor a teacher with an annual or first year continuing contract. New teachers were still assigned a primary mentor; however, instead of having only a one-on-one relationship with a single mentor, teachers were put into cohort groups for mentoring. During the initial year of implementation, there was a large community of practice (CoP) created by all the teachers and the researcher/administrator, who were a part of the induction program. In addition to this large CoP, there were five smaller CoPs created by mentoring cohort groups at EVHS. These cohort groups were arranged in different ways. Some were arranged based on gender, some were arranged based on content area, and some were combination groups. This was done to see which groups felt the most connected and happiest with the program.

**Cohort Model**

Cohort Group 1 was made up of six female teachers. In the cohort, there were two veteran mentor teachers, one first year continuing contract teacher, one annual contract level teacher, and two induction contract level teachers. The teachers were from three different departments. One of the veteran teachers is a science teacher, and she mentored two social studies teachers. One of the social studies teachers was an induction teacher and the other was the annual level teacher. The other veteran teacher is an English teacher. She mentored one first year continuing contract level English teacher and one
induction level English teacher. This cohort was homogenous in gender but heterogeneous in content areas.

Figure 3.1 Cohort Group 1 demographics visual.

Cohort Group 2 was made up of five male teachers. In the cohort, there were two veteran mentor teachers, two annual level teachers, and one induction teacher. The teachers were from two different departments. One veteran teacher is a social studies teacher and he mentored one annual level social studies teacher and one induction level social studies teacher. The other mentor teacher is an English teacher, and he mentored one annual level social studies teacher. This cohort was homogenous in gender but heterogeneous in content areas.
Cohort Group 3 three was made up of six female teachers and two male teachers.

In the cohort, there were three veteran mentor teachers, two first year continuing contract teachers, two annual level teachers, and one induction level teacher. These teachers were all from the math department, so this cohort was heterogeneous in gender, but homogenous in content area.
Cohort Group 4 was made up of three female teachers and three male teachers. This cohort had three veteran teachers, one annual level teacher, and two induction teachers. The teachers in this cohort were from various departments. One female mentor teacher from the special education department was paired with an induction level female teacher from the special education department. One male mentor teacher from the foreign language department was paired with an induction level female teacher from the foreign language department, and one male mentor teacher from the science department was paired with one annual level male teacher from the ESOL department. This cohort was heterogeneous in gender and content areas.
Cohort Group 5 was made up of four male teachers and five female teachers. In this cohort, four teachers were veteran mentor teachers, two teachers were first year continuing contract teachers, one teacher was an annual teacher, and two teachers were induction level teachers. The teachers in this cohort were also from various departments. One female mentor teacher is a science teacher who mentored an annual level female science teacher. One male mentor teacher is a science teacher who mentored a first-year continuing contract level male science teacher. One male mentor teacher is a physical education teacher who mentored an induction level female physical education teacher. One mentor teacher is a female business teacher who mentored a first-year continuing contract female business teacher and an induction level male business teacher. This cohort was heterogeneous in gender and content areas.
In these groups, reciprocal mentoring was encouraged so that all teachers learned from one another. “Reciprocal mentoring is a relationship structure that harnesses the power of mentoring into a mutually beneficial relationship where each participant takes turns being the mentor and the mentee” (Dreher, 2016, para. 4). If reciprocal mentoring is implemented correctly, “mentoring becomes a benefit, not an obligation” (Dreher, 2016, para. 4).

To create an effective community of practice at Eagle Valley High School, the five essential ingredients that had to be built into each group were as follows: (a) leadership, (b) organization, (c) training, (d) fun activities, and (e) communication. It was critical to choose caring individuals who serve their community with compassion and respect as leaders of the CoP. These teachers were chosen as the mentor teachers within each cohort group. Leaders were responsible for organizing their work groups to efficiently and effectively complete tasks. Each participant of the group was trained on
the new program and their importance to CoP’s mission and objectives and his or her responsibility for helping to achieve those goals. Together, those involved in the CoP coordinated events that were fun and enjoyable for its members. Teacher leaders planned dinners and coordinated their group meeting for sporting events, and chaperoning prom together. “Like caring leadership, fun group events are critical to the strength and longevity of the group” (Peters & Poppelton, n.d., p 19). Leadership in the group was important to ensure there was open communication within the group and that all members were aware of important information and the resources available to them. Purposes of the mentoring CoP were to support teachers both instructionally and emotionally, this included: reducing stress, social isolation, and workloads for the employee; helping the employee focus on the job; providing access to accurate and timely information; providing a forum to share resources; and building morale, cohesion, and self-sufficiency.

Over the course of the school year, the CoP created various opportunities for members to get together and socialize and discuss instruction during lunch. Lunches were planned so that all members of the cohort group had the same lunch. This was done to give teachers an opportunity to meet and talk during school instead of making meeting a before or after school requirement. During the first nine-weeks, the whole cohort group was required to meet twice a week for lunch. cohort groups were told to make Tuesday and Thursday sacred for these meetings but were given the flexibility to adjust the day if needed. During the second nine weeks, cohort groups were only required to meet as an entire group one day each week and the second day was reserved for individual mentoring pairs. Beginning the third nine weeks, cohort groups were only required to meet once each week.
At the end of the 2018-2019 school year an initial survey was sent to those who had participated in the mentoring program during that year to assess their satisfaction with the program. The survey asked for ideas on gatherings they would enjoy participating in during the year. One idea was for mentors and mentees to meet prior to the first day of school, so the researcher planned an ice cream party and invited teachers to come in the week before the first in-service day. In addition to the large community of practice, smaller more intimate communities of practice were formed by the cohort groups in which teachers were paired in for mentoring.

To develop cohesion among the large community of practice that included everyone involved in the induction program, the researcher created a Google Classroom to help with communication among group members. This was designed to serve as a platform to ask and answer questions. This idea was presented to the researcher in an initial interview with a first-year teacher at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. The teacher explained that during the 2018-2019 school year, a group of five induction teachers created a google doc and communicated with one another this way. The teacher explained that it was an easy way to ask and answer questions. Therefore, the Google Classroom page was available to teachers felt more comfortable asking a question on the google doc, rather than in person.

The researcher conducted initial interviews with teachers in the mentoring program at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. During one of those interviews, a new teacher gave the researcher a document titled “Things We Wish We Knew as First Year Teachers.” The topics from this form were covered in new teacher meetings during the
2019-2020 school year. In addition, the researcher periodically emailed mentor teachers to remind them to address those questions during cohort lunches.

Mentor teachers also received intentional professional development to refine their mentoring skills. One of the professional development workshops mentor teachers attended was on Cognitive Coaching. This PD helped mentors develop and refine their coaching skills, to help them serve as an instructional coach for mentees. This training took place on October 16th, 2019. Part of the training taught mentor teachers how to help coach their mentees when they have a problem. The training prepared mentors to ask questions and paraphrase what their mentees say to help the new teacher solve the problem on his or her own with guidance instead of direct order from the more knowledgeable other. The professional development on cognitive coaching also focused on strengthening the CoP. “The mission of Cognitive Coach is to produce self-directed persons with the cognitive capacity for excellence both independently and as members of a community” (Costa & Garmston, 2017, p. 16). Mentor teachers who attended a training were asked to fill out a survey to provide feedback about the training and its value.

In October of 2019, first-year teachers received training on classroom management. The researcher along with the Induction I teachers went to a professional development called Positively Motivating Others. In November of 2019, one induction teacher and one first-year continuing contract teacher went to the technology conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Also in November of 2019, an annual level teacher was sent to Austin, Texas for the National Social Studies Conference. In February of 2020, two induction teachers went to the Southeastern literacy conference in Hilton Head, South Carolina. In February of 2020, all mentor and beginning teachers received training on
teaching students who are classified as English Language Learners. These trainings, along with district trainings during professional development days were offered to teachers. After each professional development, teachers who attended were asked to complete a survey to assess the value of the training.

One veteran male mentor teacher and one female beginning teacher were selected to attend a professional development on classroom management the summer between the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 school year. These teachers will be responsible for helping administration train the school staff on the program. In addition, they will also train other schools in the district on the program.

Mentor teachers needed more time to be effective mentors, so the researcher collaborated with members of the administrative team to arrange for mentoring to be mentor teachers 30-minute daily duty. Instead of lunch duty, hall monitoring duty, or a similar task, mentor teachers were asked to observe, check on, lesson plan, co-teach, and/or collaborate with the beginning teachers in their cohort group for 30 minutes each day. In addition, the literature used in Chapter 2 revealed that first year teachers’ extra assignments should be limited. To address this, the researcher eliminated extra duties for first-year induction teachers and created a once a week duty of observing experienced veteran practitioners for true first-year teachers. The reduction in extra duties for mentors and true first year teachers created time for collaboration and feedback from observations to occur. This is another example of how the program was scaffolded because only true first year teachers were given the once per week duty of observing. Second- and third-year teachers had a true daily duty.
Data Collection

The primary instruments for data collection utilized throughout the action research process were surveys, semi structured interviews, and observations. Data was collected and analyzed throughout the entirety of the study in a simultaneous process. “In this type of research, it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon…to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 244).

The new comprehensive induction program was implemented at EVHS during the 2019-2020 school year. Data was formally collected over the course of the whole school year. The researcher used surveys, semi-structured interviews, and observations as the primary tools for data collection.

To understand and capture participants’ feelings, data was collected multiple times throughout the study in a variety of formats. Surveys, interviews, and observations were utilized to garner a clearer understanding of what was happening. This method of using a variety of sources is called triangulation and it is a procedure researchers use to find convergence between multiple sources of data, which adds validity to the findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Multiple points of data could come from a variety of sources, or employing the same source at different points throughout the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Because the researcher used a variety of data collection methods and collected data at various points during the study, she ensured triangulation in two different ways, which adds to the validity and trustworthiness of this study. The use of multiple methods and multiple sources of data will help confirm emerging findings
“Triangulation...increases credibility and quality by countering the concern (or accusation) that a study’s findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator’s blinders” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 245). In addition to triangulation, the collaboration with participants added another layer of validity by using “member checks or respondent validation” to rule “out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 246).

Surveys, interviews, and observations were used over the course of the study to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

At the end of the fall 2019 semester, select teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured style to assess teachers’ thoughts and feelings on the changes being implemented in the mentoring program. Interviews were appropriate to assess the thoughts and feelings of participants which were critical for understanding the successes and shortcomings of the system. The semi-structured style was best because “this format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 110). The teachers were selected using a typical non-probability sampling strategy. A typical sample is “one that is selected because it represents the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 97). The interviews took place in the researcher’s office and they were recorded using an audio recorder. The researcher compiled two sets of interview questions, one for mentor teachers and one for mentee teachers.
Table 3.2 Mentor Teacher Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do you feel about the changes made to the mentoring program this year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What has been the most significant benefit if anything to come from the changes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is the tone/atmosphere of your cohort group lunches?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How has not having a duty helped you be a better mentor teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How have you and the other members of your cohort group helped support new teachers emotionally?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What things were done/discussed in your groups to better new teacher’s instruction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How has working in this group made you feel more emotionally supported?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How has working with this group helped improve your instruction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you think the second- and third-year teachers have benefited from having more support?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What noticeable changes/growth have you observed in your mentee’s instruction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. What professional development have you received this year that you feel has helped you as a mentor?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. What PD would help?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How have you implemented practices from the PDs you have attended? (Cognitive coaching)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. What, if any of the changes made to the program do you dislike and feel are unnecessary or not effective?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Do you like meeting during lunch as opposed to before or after school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Do you feel the additional time allotted for group meetings is being used effectively/efficiently for mentoring and coaching?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. How do you feel that the inclusion of second- and third-year teachers has affected the group as a whole?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. How do you feel about the group dynamic of mentoring?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. How many observations have you been able to do with your mentee?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Has your mentee been able to observe you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 Beginning Teacher Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning Teacher Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you feel that you are receiving adequate support from your mentor?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you feel that you receive more support being in a cohort group than from the traditional one on one mentoring model? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What do you feel can be done to improve or increase the amount of support being provided to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Describe your overall experience with the mentoring program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. How do you feel the group dynamic of the cohort enhances or adds to the mentoring program?
6. What is the tone/atmosphere of your cohort group lunches?
7. How has working with this group helped improve your instruction?
8. Do you feel the second- and third-year teachers benefit from being included in the mentoring program? Please explain.
9. How many observations have you been able to do of your mentor?
10. Has your mentor been able to observe you?
11. What were some of the coaching tips you have received from your mentor?
   a. Have these been helpful?
   b. How have you implemented these into your own practice?
12. What noticeable changes/growth have you observed in your instruction?
13. What professional development have you received this year that you feel has helped you as a mentor?
14. What PD would help?
15. How have you implemented practices from the PDs you have attended?
16. What, if any of the changes made to the program do you dislike and feel are unnecessary or not effective?
17. Do you like meeting during lunch as opposed to before or after school?
18. How does your experience and expertise add to the value of the cohort group for beginning teachers?
19. Do you feel that you are gaining experience to be a certified mentor from this experience?
20. Does including second- and third-year teachers enhance the program for first year teachers? How?
21. *(For first year teachers only)* How has not having a daily 30-minute duty helped you this year?

**Surveys**

During the 2019-2020 school year, the researcher used surveys to collect quantitative data from Likert scale questions and qualitative data from open ended questions. Participants were surveyed four times during the school year: once in September, once in December, once in February, and once in May. This survey was a formative assessment of how the program was doing at each interim. The surveys were a researcher generated document, as they were created by the researcher with feedback from participants. The surveys rendered statistical, quantitative data from Likert scale questions as well as narrative, qualitative data collected from open ended questions.
“Statistical data from surveys on any number of topics – all can be treated as documents in support of a qualitative investigation” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 174).

All participants took the same survey, there was no difference between the survey mentor teachers and beginning teachers took, and a variation of the same survey was used at each interim. The survey sent after interim three was not anonymous. The researcher wanted one survey that would reveal how teachers with various levels of teaching experience felt about the program. Teacher participants were informed that the February survey was not anonymous.

The May survey included specific questions to assess the program’s impact on teachers during the COVID-19 e-Learning phase of the school year when teachers were faced with novel challenges and isolation.

A copy of the survey sent in September and December can be seen in Appendix E. The survey sent to participants in February can be viewed in Appendix F, and the final survey sent in May can be found in Appendix G.

Table 3.4 Survey Question Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Administration</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th># of Likert Scale Questions</th>
<th># of open-ended questions</th>
<th># of MC questions</th>
<th>Total # of questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September Survey</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December Survey</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February Survey</td>
<td>Not anonymous</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May Survey</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because the surveys were sent at four points during the school year, it allowed the researcher to measure how participants’ feelings changed over the course of the school year. These surveys were sent electronically through Google Forms.

The researcher also used surveys to measure how participants felt about the professional development opportunities they were given. When participants participated in unique professional developments, they received a survey through Google Forms to provide feedback on how useful the training was for them. The researcher considered a professional development unique if it was one that a participant was specifically asked to participate in and was not available to the faculty as a whole. The survey that participants completed about their professional developments had 10 questions; five questions were open-ended and five questions were Likert scale questions. The same survey was given after each professional development.

**Observations**

“Observations are also conducted to triangulate emerging findings; that is, they are used in conjunction with interviewing and document analysis to substantiate the findings” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 139). In addition to surveys and interviews, observations were the third method used to collect data and ensure triangulation. Observations were important because “observational data represent a first-hand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 137). Observations are a way to see if the feedback from surveys and interviews is actually what is happening (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher along with two other members of the administrative team observed cohort lunches randomly throughout the school year. During these observations, the
observer did not participate in group conversations but was a silent observer taking note of how participants were seated in the room and the topics of conversation that were discussed. These things were noted to see how the level of comfort among group members changed over time.

**Procedure**

In action research, the data analysis is focused on what happens and how it happens as the study progresses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the beginning or planning phase of the study, the researcher conducted individual interviews with first year teachers and mentor teachers and sent a survey to find out participant’s initial views or experiences of the mentoring program at EVHS. The researcher also discussed and planned the research process with participants. In August, the researcher planned an ice cream social that was optional for teachers in the program to attend. At the ice cream social, new teachers had the opportunity to meet their mentors and the school’s administrative team. The researcher also discussed the new program during one of the August in-service days teachers had to work before students came back to school. In addition, the researcher planned a Q&A breakfast for teachers on the day she passed out and collected consent surveys. The data collection methods were repeated at various stages until the end of the study, when participants’ final perceptions were determined.

Data collection and analysis happened simultaneously over the course of the research study. Throughout the process, the strategy for analyzing data moved from inductive, when categories to answer the research questions were constructed and evidence was emerging, to deductive, when evidence to support the already developed categories was sorted.
Figure 3.6 Data collection process visual.

**Initial Data Collection**
- At the end of the 2018-2019 school year.
- Interviews with first year teachers and mentors.
- Surveys sent to teachers who were certified mentors.

**Program Introduction**
- July ice cream social during the summer before the start of the 19-20 school year.
- Cohort Groups emailed to teachers in the induction program in July.
- Training during an inservice day in August. The program expectations and explanation were explained.
- Initial cohort group meetings took place in August on an inservice day.
- Consent forms signed.

**Program Implementation**
- The new program was implemented in August 2019.
- Cohort groups had initial meetings on an inservice day. Participant consent forms were signed.
- Mentor expectations provided to mentor teachers. Teachers were provided with tips on how to spend their daily 30 minutes of duty time to help their mentees.
- First year teacher duty description provided with an observation schedule.

**Data Collection and Analysis**
- Surveys sent in: September, December, February, and May. Results assessed after each and program altered.
- Random cohort lunch observations began in September.
- Informal meetings held with teachers in the program to address ways to help beginning teachers.
- Emails and Google Classroom posts were sent by the researcher.
- Professional Development opportunities provided.
- Interviews done at the conclusion of the semester.
Data Analysis

The analysis of data was an ongoing process that began at the onset of the study; therefore, the data was a valuable tool to drive the direction of following interviews, observations, and surveys. Understanding the data allowed the opportunity to go back and ask the participants more questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to fill in holes and clarify the data. Each data set influenced the next and the questions were fine-tuned as the interviews, surveys, and observations progressed.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The researcher used the open-ended survey questions, observations, and interviews to collect qualitative data. After each interview, observation, and survey administration, the researcher used her journal to write a summary of the data collected. Then the researcher transcribed the audio recordings of her interviews and created categories for the open-ended survey questions. The three categories used to classify survey responses were: positive, negative, and neutral; under each category the research put the comments that fell into each one. Once the data was transcribed and organized, the researcher used grounded theory to code and analyze the data. Grounded theory was first introduced in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss to legitimize qualitative research (Haig, 2010). Grounded Theory is a widely known and accepted approach to analyzing the data garnered from qualitative research and since its creation and further development, it has become extensively used in the education field to construct theory from data (Haig, 2010).

The researcher began with open coding to find broad categories that fit into the data. Once the broad categories were developed, the researcher used axial coding to
connect the categories and condense them into more consolidated and manageable concepts from the sets of data.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

Quantitative data sources include: the retention rate at the end of the school year, Likert scale survey data, and checklists from observations. Retention data from new teachers involved in the former mentor model was collected at the end of the 2017-2018 school year and another set of data was collected at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. The researcher further broke the data down to determine what percentage of the beginning teachers who left were first year teachers and what percentage of the teachers leaving were moving to another school or leaving teaching all together. The researcher also determined what percentage of teachers who left were mentor teachers. The retention rate data from the treatment group of beginning and mentor teachers was collected at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. The researcher also broke this data down to determine what percentage of the beginning teachers leaving were first year teachers and what percentage of teachers leaving EVHS were moving to another school or leaving the profession all together. The researcher also determined the retention rate of mentor teachers. In addition, the researcher compared the school’s retention rate data for beginning teachers to the retention rate data of the entire district for beginning teachers.

To make the retention rate data more valid, the researcher included Likert scale survey questions for participants to rate their feelings about the new comprehensive induction program implemented at EVHS. Their ratings were then quantified by the weight the researcher added to the selected responses. This weight allowed the researcher to find the mean average and standard deviation for each question for each survey.
administration. In order to do this, the “x value” or the participants’ numerical response on the Likert scale was given a weight. Therefore, x is the numerical value (1-5) chosen by the participant when they answered the Likert question. For each question, strongly disagree was given a weight of 1, disagree was given a weight of 2, neutral was given a weight of 3, agree was given a weight of 4, and strongly agree was given a weight of 5. The weight “x-value” was multiplied by the frequency of the response to find xf. The sum of xf was then divided by the number of participants to find the average mean. The standard deviation was also found to show if the majority of responses were clustered around the mean or if there were any outliers or discrepancies in the data.

**Summary of Analysis**

Data analysis and coding was a continuous process. From the analysis, the researcher found reoccurring themes and patterns that helped characterize the data and support the findings. The codes established from data themes from observations, surveys, and interviews created categories or themes to answer the research questions. This process helped create a holistic understanding of the case.

The codes were used to create an inventory of the whole set of data. The inventory, or case record, included the data from the surveys, interviews, and observations. The inventory assured that important information was not forgotten or overlooked because the data set was organized and labeled in a coherent way (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The inventory was comprised of units of data that revealed information that was relevant to the study and responsive to the research questions. The process of refining the data codes and categories continued through the writing of the findings. The findings will be explained in Chapter 4.
Summary

This chapter outlined the mixed methods case study design of the study and research methods. In the next chapter, the findings will be presented in the form of organized, descriptive accounts that explain the data. Due to the novelty of cohort mentoring groups, the findings will be used to make predictions or generalizations about pairing mentor groups and using this method of mentoring instead of the traditional method. The data can be used “to draw inferences about future activity” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 215).
CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Overview of the Study

The problem of practice addressed by this study was the need to provide better support to beginning teachers. The researcher addressed this problem by creating and implementing a more comprehensive teacher induction program. This study was important because while school districts generally understand the importance of mentoring and induction programs, questions remain concerning how to best structure mentoring programs and what content needs to be included to provide adequate support for teachers (Alexander & Alexander, 2019). In addition, the cohort group design of this program is novel, especially in secondary schools, and little to no research has been conducted on the topic. To design an effective program, school leaders must have an in-depth understanding of the issues that negatively influence their organization. For example, new teachers leave the profession due to work overload, professional isolation, student behavior, and a culture of judging teachers based on student performance (Watt & Richardson, 2011). Sasser (2018) attempted to fill in a gap in the knowledge of what is needed for an induction program to be successful; however, there is still much to be uncovered about what new teachers find most useful in an induction program.
Research Questions

The following question and three sub-questions were addressed in this mixed methods action research case study. The questions investigated during the 2019-2020 academic school year were:

1. What impact does involvement in a comprehensive mentoring program for beginning teachers have on participants?
   a. How does using a cohort model of mentoring impact overall teacher satisfaction?
   b. How did teacher perceptions of the newly implemented program change over the course of the academic school year?
   c. How does involvement in a comprehensive induction program increase the retention rate of beginning teachers at EVHS?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods, action research, case study was to determine if a more comprehensive induction program that implements a team approach to mentoring would better support the needs of beginning teachers. This study was designed to help beginning teachers succeed by pairing them with colleagues to work as a community of practice. The more comprehensive program was designed to provide teachers with emotional and instructional support through enhanced engagement within a community of practice.

Pilot Study

Data was collected from a pilot study at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. The researcher felt a pilot study was an important step in the action research process
because it allowed her to get input from participants on what they wanted from the mentoring program. To collect this initial data, the researcher used surveys and semi-structured interviews to determine what teachers wanted from the mentoring program. The researcher coded the data obtained from the surveys and interviews to determine what reforms would make the most significant impact on the induction program. Survey participants included all certified mentor teachers and all teachers with an induction level contract that participated in the program during the 2018-2019 school year under the old mentoring model. Some questions were specific only to mentor teachers who actively mentored during the 2018-2019 school year; therefore, the number of responses in the findings from the pilot study varied based on the prerequisites for each question. The researcher also interviewed three induction teachers and two mentor teachers in the summer of 2019. The researcher used the interviews to clarify the survey data and to expand on the data collected from the surveys. The data from the pilot study was coded and then used to determine what supports would make the greatest impact on teachers and their satisfaction with the induction program, and therefore used in the design process.

The researcher felt that giving the participants a chance to collaborate with her and understanding the problem being addressed from the practitioners’ vantage point were both important aspects of action research (Effron & Ravid, 2013). When the information was collected from the pilot study, it was used to design and implement appropriate strategies to improve the problem. Based on the data collected from surveys sent to induction and mentor teachers and the semi-structured interviews with both beginning and mentor teachers, the researcher was able to create a vision for the
induction program at EVHS and construct the program to include interventions designed to address the most pressing issues voiced by teachers.

One of the pilot survey questions addressed to both beginning and mentor teachers was “what qualities do you believe make a good mentor?” The researcher coded and consolidated the mentor teachers’ responses, which revealed that they believe a good mentor is approachable, understanding, responsive, and knowledgeable about the school and its procedures, educational law, and teaching strategies. Mentees’ responses revealed that they believed a good mentor is a person that is approachable, collaborative, understanding, good at encouraging others, and knowledgeable about content and school procedures. From this data, it was determined that beginning teachers want and need an encouraging mentor who understands the importance of being approachable, understanding, collaborative, and willing to share his or her knowledge on curriculum, procedures, and best practices. Therefore, the vision for the new comprehensive induction program was to provide mentor teachers who could fulfill those needs and to be able to provide time for this to happen.

The next step was to determine what interventions needed to be put into place to make the program as effective as possible. Based on the literature introduced and discussed in Chapter 2 and feedback from the pilot study, the researcher was able to create a more comprehensive induction program for EVHS. The interventions included in the new program were based on theory, literature, and participant feedback.

As a result of consistent research and the pilot study, there were substantial changes made to the mentoring program at EVHS during the 2019-2020 school year. One of those changes was that mentoring went from being a one-on-one practice to being a
group or a community practice. The researcher conceived this concept while studying Lave and Wenger’s theory on communities of practice as well as other theories on how adults learn and grow, and she believed that incorporating these concepts into the mentoring model was the best option to help move the teachers at EVHS forward.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, EVHS makes up for teacher shortages by asking teachers to teach extra blocks. Many of our mentor teachers are the most experienced, veteran teachers, who are willing to teach all day with no planning period; therefore, the lack of a planning period or lack of having a common planning period with their mentees can be a barrier to the mentoring relationship and the program’s structure. The idea of cohort mentoring groups was solidified when a participant responded that a beginning teacher depending on one other person is a bad practice because that one other person may not always be readily available when the beginning teacher is having a bad day or needs help with lesson planning as they may be teaching an extra block or may not have a common planning period.

A question on the pilot study survey asked participants if they would be willing to participate in group activities outside of school hours to build strong communities of practice. Out of 29 survey participants, two (6.9%) strongly disagreed, two (6.9%) disagreed, seven (24.1%) were neutral, nine (31%) agreed, and nine (31%) strongly agreed. Notably, 62% agreed or strongly agreed that they would indeed be willing to participate in group activities outside of school hours. When asked to elaborate on the types of activities in which they would like to participate, lunches, dinners, and a beginning of the year social were the most common reoccurring responses; 21 out of 29 (72%) survey participants mentioned at least one of these activities in their responses.
After reading the responses, the researcher decided that providing mentors and their mentees with a common lunch period would be ideal since some mentors have other after school responsibilities. Therefore, providing a common lunch period for mentoring cohorts was added to the comprehensive induction program guidelines.

A comprehensive induction program is defined by Julie Woods (2016), an educational policy analyst, as “a multi-year, structured program of mentorship and professional development in which trained mentors provide constructive feedback to new teachers” (p. 2). The researcher asked both beginning and mentor teachers their opinion on extending the mentoring program to provide teachers in their second and third years of teaching with a mentor. When asked if teachers believed that beginning teachers should be mentored into their second and third years of teaching, 0 (0%) of mentor teachers strongly disagreed, 2 (11.1%) of mentor teachers disagreed, 2 (11.1%) of mentor teachers were neutral, 7 (38.9%) of mentor teachers agreed, and 7 (38.9%) of mentor teachers strongly agreed. Beginning teachers responded to the question as follows: 0 (0%) strongly disagreed, 1 (9.1%) disagreed, 3 (27.3%) were neutral, 2 (18.2%) agreed, and 5 (45.5%) strongly agreed. In total, 72.4% of participants strongly agreed (41.4%) or agreed (31%) that beginning teachers should be mentored into their second and third years of teaching. In addition to being asked the more general question mentioned above, beginning teachers were also specifically asked if they believed having a mentor during their second and third years of teaching would help them. To which, 63.6% of beginning teachers indicated that having a mentor during their second and third years of teaching would benefit them while only 36.4% felt that it would not benefit them. Based on this data and the literature, the program was expanded to include teachers in their second and
third years of teaching. This aspect of induction was changed district wide due to mentor teachers being paid for each mentee they help. This was the only feature of the new comprehensive induction program that was implemented district wide.

![Figure 4.1 Likert scale Question 1 pilot study graph](image)

Table 4.1 Likert Scale Question 1 Pilot Study Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mentor Teachers</th>
<th>Beginning Teachers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another question on the pilot survey asked mentor teachers what administration could do to better support them in their role as a mentor. The researcher coded the responses and determined they fell into the two main categories of providing more time (66.7%) for collaboration and having administrators be more available for advice (33.3%). Based on this data, the researcher removed extra daily duties from mentor teachers and first-year teachers to address these needs. In place of the traditional 30-minute daily duty that teachers perform around the school during the day, the researcher informed the mentor teachers that mentoring and supporting the beginning teachers was to be their 30-minute daily duty. Therefore, instead of performing a traditional 30-minute daily duty, the expectation was that the designated mentor teachers use this time mentoring a beginning teacher in their cohort group. The researcher gave mentors a written duty description, this can be found in Appendix H, which included suggestions for techniques and methods to use in support of their beginning teachers. In addition, the researcher eliminated the extra daily duties assigned to first year teachers and instead, required they do a 30-minute observation of a veteran teacher each week. In order to
address the need for having greater access to administrators for advice, the researcher created a Google Classroom and invited all the teachers in the mentoring program to join. This was used as a platform to communicate with teachers and send ideas for cohort lunch meetings. In addition, the researcher, who was also an administrator, communicated frequently with mentors through email and made herself available so that teachers could discuss ideas, problems, etc. with her.

![Figure 4.3 Pilot study pie graph 2.](image)

**Summary of Pilot Study**

Based on the data gathered from the pilot study and the literature presented in Chapter 2, there were four significant changes made to the mentoring program. The first change is that the program went from the traditional one-on-one model to a cohort group model. The second change is that the program was extended to include teachers on an annual and first-year continuing contract. This meant that teachers continued to have a mentor after their first-year teaching. The third significant change is that time was made during the day for collaborate to take place. This was done by rearranging the entire school’s lunch schedule to ensure that all members of each cohort group had them same
lunch. The fourth significant change was that mentor teachers and first-year induction teachers no longer had to do a 30-minute daily duty around the school. Instead, their duties were tailored specifically for their role in the induction program. In addition, we also used stricter guidelines in selecting mentors to ensure that mentor teachers embodied what beginning teachers said they wanted and needed in a mentor. Which is an encouraging teacher who understands the importance of being approachable, understanding, collaborative, and willing to share his or her knowledge on curriculum, procedures, and best practices.

**Research Study Findings**

The researcher collected data multiple times throughout the study conducted during the 2019-2020 school year. Interviews, surveys, and observations were used to triangulate the data and provide validity to the findings. Participants included mentor and beginning teachers at the school where the study took place. The data was broken down into codes and categories to help the researcher summarize and explain the findings.

These findings are from the study conducted during the 2019-2020 academic school year. The findings from the study will be presented and organized by research question with the data themes that correspond. The main question will be addressed first followed by each subsequent sub-question. The quantitative data will be presented with research questions 1b and 1c. The qualitative data and the themes that emerged from it will be presented in researcher questions 1 and 1a. During the axial coding of the qualitative data, six themes emerged. These six themes are critical to answering the primary research question and sub questions. The themes will be discussed in more detail below and presented in correlation with the research questions.
What Impact Does Involvement in a Comprehensive Mentoring Program for Beginning Teachers Have on Participants?

After the open coding phase and during axial coding, two main themes emerged from the data garnered from interviews and surveys with both beginning teachers and mentor, veteran teachers. The two themes identified answer this research question and help explain the benefits of being a part of the new comprehensive induction program implemented during the 2019-2020 school year. Each of the two themes identified in answering this research question corresponds with one of the two purposes of creating the more comprehensive mentoring program, which were to provide more instructional support and more emotional support to beginning teachers. To make the program more comprehensive, mentoring took place in cohort groups, structured meeting time was provided, and both mentor and first year induction teachers were given more time to focus on development. In addition to the cohort group affiliations, mentees continued to

Figure 4.4 Qualitative data themes for cohort mentoring model.
be paired with their own individual mentor. The two main data themes that emerged from participant responses to interview and survey questions were that being involved in the more comprehensive program that utilized a team approach to mentoring reduced feelings of isolation and improved the development of teachers’ classroom management skills and instructional epistemology (capacity building). Data collected from the participants shows that both new teachers and mentor teachers benefitted in both of these areas.

Addressing Isolation

The first theme identified is that the comprehensive induction program addressed teachers’ need for social interaction by reducing feelings of isolation. To better support teachers emotionally, addressing teachers’ feelings of isolation was a goal of the new comprehensive induction program. During interviews, teachers revealed their beliefs in how the added support provided by the cohort mentoring groups reduced feelings of isolation; therefore, achieving the goal and purpose of this study of providing more emotional support to beginning teachers. Teachers frequently discussed the relationships they had formed with the other members of their cohort groups and described how their friendships and sense of community had begun expanding. An induction teacher stated, “If I am having a bad day, lunch is something I can look forward to; some friends work at elementary schools and no one checks in on them. We have resources as well as a community; I love it.”

This sense of community even expanded beyond those teachers in the induction program. Two of the five cohort groups described how other teachers had joined their lunch groups. One teacher from Cohort 1 stated, “other fifth- and sixth-year teachers have
joined our group.” Cohort Group 1 was an all-female group and it was joined by two other female teachers. A teacher from Cohort 2 stated, “two other teachers have joined our group.” Cohort Group 2 was an all-male group, and two other male teachers managed to join them. In addition to the required weekly minimum lunch meetings, Cohort Group 1 and Cohort Group 2 also began having lunch together every day.

A mentor teacher from Cohort Group 2 stated, “I like the changes. We meet for lunch almost every day, sometimes it is educational, and sometimes it’s not. Mentees know they can come talk to me. They feel more comfortable.” One of the first-year teachers from Cohort Group 2 described the emotional support he was receiving from his mentor and how the sense of friendship and community had expanded beyond the brick and mortar school building. He stated, “This is more than just a work buddy and having the shared lunch time has helped build that relationship. I really like that.” He stated that he and his mentor started going turkey hunting together. These are the relationships the program was intended to create to make teachers feel connected to the school and desire to stay.

Mentor teachers recognized that the cohort model provided them with more emotional support by reducing their own feelings of isolation. This was also recognized by beginning teachers. When asked about the emotional support the cohort group provided, one beginning teacher talked about how good the experience had been for her mentor teacher. The beginning teacher stated that her mentor needed “extra love this year” and it had “been good for her [mentor teacher] to have us lifting her up.”

Another first-year teacher talked about how appreciative she was to have second year teachers in her cohort group, and said that she goes to second-year teachers in her
cohort group first. This teacher stated that her cohort group has made her feel like she is not on an island. A male teacher from another cohort also talked about seeking out the third-year teachers in his group. Three of the four first year teachers (75%) all mentioned the feeling of growing up fast, and that the cohort helped them adjust to life as a first-year teacher.

During the cohort lunch observations, the researcher observed groups providing emotional support by encouraging one another. Cohort members would share ideas about projects, and their colleagues would give constructive feedback or respond with words of encouragement such as: “that is a great idea.” Some cohort groups even had a designated time during lunch when they discussed what their needs were for that day or week. One male, beginning teacher described the emotional support he was receiving from his group members during lunch as “like a therapy session sometimes.”

**Developing Teachers’ Classroom Management Skills and Instructional Epistemology**

The second theme identified was that the new more comprehensive mentoring program improved teachers’ classroom management and instructional epistemology, or provided a space for capacity building among the group members. A first-year teacher stated that the members of her cohort group held each other accountable for “doing the work they said they were going to do” by asking how instructional strategies went that members had previously stated they were going to try. She stated that if a cohort member said one day they were going to try something new, the next day other members of the group would ask how that strategy went.

During interviews, three teachers from different cohort groups stated that the lunch meetings had helped them more successfully put theory into practice and more
effectively use teaching strategies. Cohorts discussed the specific strategies that had been implemented by the whole group after one member shared their use of the strategy and its benefits during lunch. Examples included, class participation trackers and rewards, more technology integration such as the use of digital notebooks, questioning strategies to use to get students to think deeper about the content, strategies to enrich content for gifted learners, differentiation for different types of learners, and strategies to help students who are classified as multi language learners. A first year teacher stated,

Because of my cohort group and the lunch meetings, I have seen different websites that now I use every day. I came into this year, not super comfortable with technology, but group members have tutored me in the way of technology, and I am more comfortable with the digital stuff. I feel like I have grown a lot in my instruction, especially in the technology department.

Another first-year teacher explained that he feels more supported with classroom management and instruction from the cohort because he can hear more voices and appreciates that everyone’s personality is different, and it provides different points of view. Because of the different points of view and personalities within his cohort, he felt that he has seen and learned different classroom management techniques and gotten more opinions on instructional strategies.

A third-year teacher discussed how much she appreciated the duty being removed from mentor teachers because it had allowed her mentor to come and observe her more than when she was a first-year teacher. She explained that her mentor had given her a suggestion on how to arrange her classroom so she could have better sight lines on all the students, and it had drastically improved her classroom management. Another beginning teacher discussed how his cohort group had really helped him with differentiated
instruction and learning how to enrich the course for gifted learners and distinguish between college prep and honors curriculums.

Veteran teachers also benefited from this instructional collaboration as well. Veteran teachers also described how they had benefited from these discussions and tried new strategies in their own classrooms involving technology. This was further verified when a first-year teacher made the following statement, “my mentor is asking me for help, and I just thought, wow this is crazy.”

One cohort group described how they had opened their Google Drives to one another so they could more easily share resources, apps, websites, and examples of student work. Beginning teachers discussed how the groups work together to collaborate, and one of the teachers stated, “we build off all the ideas discussed during lunch to improve instruction.”

During observations, cohort groups were observed discussing classroom management techniques, and group members shared their policies on common discipline issues like cell phones. Groups discussed the importance of being consistent in addressing discipline issues. A beginning teacher stated in an interview that because of these conversations, she was more consistent with classroom management and had seen an improvement in her lessons because of her better developed classroom management techniques and strategies.

Teachers were also observed collaborating on projects and discussing in-class activities related to the standards. Furthermore, some teachers were even collaborating on cross-curricular projects. In the beginning of the year, mentor teachers were observed helping beginning teachers write and set goals for their student learning objectives.
(SLOs). Mentor teachers also worked with beginning teachers to help them gain an understanding of accommodation plans. The lunches were also used to ensure that beginning teachers had an understanding of how the school functions and what to expect on special weeks such as homecoming.

How Does Using a Cohort Model of Mentoring Impact Overall Teacher Satisfaction?

Four themes from the qualitative data were identified during axial coding to answer this research question. Therefore, themes three, four, five, and six will be discussed in this section. The third theme identified from the qualitative data is that the more comprehensive induction program creates a space for building meaningful and positive relationships. A first-year induction teacher stated that the atmosphere of her cohort’s lunches was “usually very positive” and that she “overall looked forward to going to lunch” and felt everyone in the group “leaves better than when we came in.” She attributed this to the emotional connections with group members and to having the time to vent or discuss problems with friends. This teacher felt the cohort lunches helped her group bond and become “more comfortable being honest with one another” and “holding each other accountable.”

The fourth theme identified was that the more comprehensive induction program allowed mentors to model for one another in a group setting. Mentor teachers discussed the fact that they appreciated seeing how other mentor teachers handled things and answered questions. In addition, the mentor teachers felt that between all the mentor teachers in the group, one of them had an answer to the questions being asked. One induction teacher stated that the group aspect had benefited her because her mentor was
more helpful in the group environment. The teacher said that one on one her mentor tended to be more negative, but in the group environment the mentor teacher was positive. The induction teacher elaborated by saying, “my mentor is more helpful in the group because we offer suggestions, but one on one my mentor is more focused on what I did wrong.”

The fifth theme identified was that the more comprehensive induction program increased the amount of quality feedback through access to multiple mentors. A common praise of the new program was that it provided different perspectives on how to handle situations and solve problems. First-year teachers expressed that they liked having access to more than one mentor. One first-year teacher talked about how much she appreciated having multiple sources of knowledge and sought out different mentors from her cohort group for different purposes. Another beginning teacher stated that the cohort group was beneficial because there were people with different personalities and different outlooks in the cohort from which they could learn, and that each member of the group brought different strengths. She stated this was especially beneficial when the mentee’s personality and outlook were different from his or her direct mentor’s personality or outlook. Another beginning teacher added to the positive feedback of being in a cohort mentoring model instead of the traditional one-on-one mentoring model by saying,

I am so glad I have other people to depend on. I am glad I have the cohort, I am glad I have other people in different seasons and stages. I am really glad I have different personalities, you get comfortable with different people. I am glad I don’t just have one person that I feel I have to go and talk to that person.

The sixth theme identified is that the more comprehensive induction program provides teachers with more overall comprehensive support. One female beginning teacher described the cohort model as “really helpful.” Another female first-year teacher
said the following when asked if she was satisfied with the comprehensive induction program implemented at EVHS:

They [my cohort group] make me a better teacher every day. We all have our strengths; we lean on each other for a lot. I think everybody should be in a cohort group. When are you done learning? When am I ever not going to be needing somebody else that can look at something I am doing and make it better? I am so grateful for my cohort. When someone takes a class or gets a certification, we are able to pull that from one another and glean from one another. The model created here has worked really well for us.

Another beginning teacher shared similar thoughts on the program,

This model takes away any option for there to be no support; with five to six people, you can find someone to click with or learn from/with. It increases accountability, it supports us and validates us. My experience has been great. Someone form the group is always pouring into the other members. Why wouldn’t you model induction this way, I think this has got to be more productive than the traditional method.

This sentiment was also reflected in a conversation with another first-year teacher who was male, and who talked about being overwhelmed with keeping up with everything during his first months of teaching. He stated, “those first months teaching I was overwhelmed and this [the induction program] really helped a lot. I was so worried about doing this and doing that, but now, I just go. So, the program really helped, it was huge.”

One aspect of the program that seemed to be helpful was the weekly duty of observing other teachers. Another first-year teacher said that he benefited from having the weekly duty of observing another teacher. He said it helped him discover things he should change. Some were very subtle changes like having a device to click and change the board, which helped him move around more. He also said his mentor did a great job asking questions, which helped him with his questioning skills. He said that during his observations he would think, “I am definitely using this.”
A third-year teacher explained in an interview why she was thankful to be a part of the more comprehensive mentoring program. She stated, “I know that I have backup and support, and it makes my job so, so much easier. I get instructional support, and I need the ‘Hey, we care about you.’ I want this support.” She went on to say they never have a question in their cohort without an answer, and that she never feels alone. This teacher provided important insight because she worked at two different schools in the district during the day, so she could compare the level of support at each. Regarding support at EVHS, she said, “This is not an island. If you want support and resources, this is where you want to be.” Another teacher also used the island metaphor when describing why he liked the set-up of the comprehensive mentoring program. This first-year male teacher described his cohort’s lunches as very pleasant. He said they used the time to meet and talk, mostly about how their classes were going. This teacher worked with a homogenous content group and he explained that getting to work together with members of his department really helped and made him feel like he was not on an island. He said,

We all work really well together and it is nice; I like the group because you don’t get a single perspective. You can pick and pull from different people. I see all the people in my group as a mentor.

At the end of the year, mentor teachers responded to an open-ended survey question with responses about the importance of the multiple perspectives the new more comprehensive induction program provided. One mentor teacher gave the following response, “I like the cohort mentoring model because it offers more than just one teacher’s perspective. It is a community that offers support emotionally and instructionally.” Another mentor teacher elaborated on why the multiple perspectives the first teacher talked about is important. This mentor stated, “What works for one teacher
may not work for another. Being in a cohort gives the opportunity to see several different approaches to problems.”

Another beginning teacher discussed the positive benefits of being a part of a community of practice. They shared the following statement in the additional comments section of the February survey, “I was lucky to have great mentors and wholeheartedly agree that a community feeling helps bring new teachers into the fold and integrate a lot easier.”

On the anonymous May survey, a first-year teacher responded that the cohort group helped them find their new normal and become more comfortable at the school. This teacher also discussed how the new model provided a sense of community or family. The teacher said,

I like the cohort mentoring model because I have gotten to know some colleagues that I never would have known. It is neat because now I know them to the point where it feels like a little family. When I first started, I felt really anxious because everything was so new. My cohort made me feel comfortable and helped me find my new normal.

Mentor teachers shared that they felt less stress because the new more comprehensive induction program had more structure, and they understood the expectation for their role as mentor better. A veteran teacher of 14 years said that she felt the changes had been positive. She stated that previously, there was no guide, and she did not understand expectations for her role as mentor. She went on to say, “I really didn’t know what to do or what to say; I knew to observe and write up the observation form, but now I feel like I know what is expected of me.”
How Did Teacher Perceptions of the Newly Implemented Program Change Over the Course of the Academic School Year?

On each of the four surveys, the researcher asked participants an open-ended survey question concerning what they liked or disliked about the mentoring program. The researcher categorized responses into the following three categories: positive, negative, and neutral. On the September survey, 15 (48.39%) participants gave positive responses, 5 (16.13%) participants, gave negative responses, and 11 (35.48%) gave a response that was neutral. On the December survey, 22 (70.97%) participants gave positive responses, 7 (22.58%) participants gave negative responses, and 2 (6.45%) participants gave neutral responses. On the February survey, 21 (70%) participants gave positive responses, 4 (13.33%) participants gave negative feedback, and 5 (16.67%) gave a neutral response. In May, 22 (70.97%) participants gave positive feedback, 4 (12.9%) gave negative feedback, and 5 (16.13%) gave neutral feedback.

Likert scale survey questions collected data at four different intervals throughout the academic school year in order to measure teachers’ perceptions of aspects of the mentoring program. Each response received a numerical weighting to produce quantitative data used to determine the weighted mean and standard deviation of participant responses. Standard deviation was important to reveal outliers in the data because outliers have a big impact on data. Ideally, the researcher wanted a standard deviation of less than one ($\sigma < 1$). The weighted mean was important to help create a clearer numerical picture of how participants collectively responded to each question. This is because the values that contribute to the mean are weighted based on the population. For example, the numerical representation for each answer option was
multiplied by the population, or number of participants, who chose that response; therefore, giving a more accurate mean or average of the numbers. The weighted mean and standard deviation were then used to identify outliers in the data by giving them a z-score based on their response. A participant’s z-score identifies how far from the standard, or average, that person responded. A positive z-score correlates to a response that is above the mean while a negative z-score correlates to a response that is below the mean. A z-score or +3 or -3 is considered to be an outlier.

The first Likert scale question on the survey assessed teachers’ levels of satisfaction with the mentoring program. Figure 4.5 shows how participants’ responses changed over the course of the academic school year. The weighted mean reveals the number where the most responses were clustered. In September, the weighted mean to this question was 3.97; this increased to a weighted mean of 4.48 at the end of the school year in May, with a standard deviation of 0.72. For this question, participants’ satisfaction increased at each survey interval and the standard deviation remained less than one. From September to December, the weighted mean increased from 3.97 to 4.06 or by 0.09. From December to February, the weighted mean increased from 4.06 to 4.3; this was the biggest gain in the weighted mean as it increased by 0.24 at the February measurement. From February to May, the weighted mean increased from 4.3 to 4.48, this was an increase of 0.18. Overall, from September through May, the weighted mean increased by 0.51. Therefore, the average of all participants’ responses to this question was between strongly agree (5) and agree (4) with a numerical weight of 4.48.

One piece of the new comprehensive mentoring program was that all first-year teachers were relieved of performing 30-minute daily duties to reduce stress by providing
them with more time during their contracted hours. However, they were assigned a 30-minute weekly duty to observe another teacher to help them develop instructionally. Prior to the 2019-2020 school year, first year teachers, like all other teachers had a 30-minute daily duty. Most of the 30-minute daily duties serve the purpose of monitoring students and helping to maintain order throughout the building. During the 2019-2020 school year, first-year teachers were given a weekly duty of observing another teacher in the building. The first-year teachers were provided an observation schedule that included the names of pre-selected, veteran teachers who agreed to allow a new teacher observe. In the beginning of the year, only veteran teachers were on the observation schedule for first year teachers to observe. However, first year teachers requested that they all be added to the observation schedule so they could observe each other. The researcher wanted to give participants a voice in how the program was structured, so she added the four first-year induction teachers to the observation schedule. During an interview one first-year teacher stated that she liked this change and felt like it added value to their 30-minute weekly duty because they could give each other feedback where they may not give a veteran teacher who was not a part of their cohort group feedback. Another first-year teacher explained that he was happy with his weekly duty of observing another teacher. He stated that not having a traditional duty gave him more time to get himself together and composed. He explained that being able to see other teachers teach was something that he needed.

I’ve needed to see what other people do because my first day I was a mess. I wasn’t sure what I was doing. Being able to go and see what other teachers are doing is a really important thing to be able to do. I learned how to structure my class and effectively organize things.
In an open-ended survey question in February, a mentor made the statement that the program had grown on him/her since beginning in September. This statement is consistent with the data as it shows that perceptions of the program improved over the course of the year.

![Graph showing changes in perceptions of the program over time.]

Figure 4.5 Likert scale question line graph 1.

Table 4.2 Likert Scale Question 1 Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am happy with the mentoring program.</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Mean</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second Likert scale question on the survey was used to measure if participants felt the cohort mentoring model was more supportive than the traditional one on one mentoring model. Figure 4.6 shows how participants’ responses changed over the course of the academic school year to this question. In September, the weighted mean to
this question was 4.10. One participant rated the questions strongly disagree (1) and was determined to be an outlier with a z-score of -3.16. The weighted mean increased by 0.03 in December to 4.13. In December, one participant still rated the question strongly disagree, but due to the increase in other participant ratings, this participant’s z-score was a -3.26 and is considered an outlier. The weighted mean increased to 4.37 from December to February which was the highest increase of 0.24. No participants rated the questions strongly disagree (1) or disagree (2), and there were no outliers in February. In May, the weighted mean increased to 4.45, which was an increase of 0.08 from February to May. No participants rated this question lower than neutral (3), and no participants were considered outliers. For this question, participants’ satisfaction increased at each survey interval, and the standard deviation remained less than one. Overall, from September to May, the weighted mean increased by 0.35. Therefore, the average of all participants’ responses to this question was between strongly agree (5) and agree (4), with a numerical weight of 4.48. The standard deviation in May was 0.72.

In an interview, a third-year teacher said she found the new cohort model to be much more supportive. She said that she loved the group aspect because her department is so small and this gave her other resources that she had never had before and allowed her to get to know more colleagues. She stated, “I love the cohort group; more people are always going to provide more support.”

One example of how the cohort model provided additional support to mentor teachers was by giving them access to other mentor teachers with whom they could collaborate and work with to determine the best mentoring practices. This was revealed on the February survey when a veteran teacher with 28 years of teaching experience
revealed that she liked “having the support of another mentor to bounce ideas off of” during lunch. Another mentor teacher stated that she liked the model because sometimes her mentee would ask a question that she was not able to answer, but another veteran teacher was always there to help.

On the February survey, which was not anonymous, a mentor teacher with 17 years of experience stated in an open-ended survey question that they liked the cohort model because it provided more support and resources to beginning teachers. This teacher stated that it was beneficial to receive insight about strategies and experiences from different teachers, especially those in different disciplines. On this same survey, a first-year female teacher responded that she liked the cohort model because it provided her with the opportunity to get to know and become close with more of her colleagues.

![Figure 4.6 Likert scale question line graph 2.](image)

The cohort mentoring model provides more support than the traditional one on one mentoring model.
The third Likert scale question was designed to determine if the comprehensive mentoring program was achieving its intended purpose of making beginning teachers feel more emotionally supported. Figure 4.7 shows how participants’ responses changed over the course of the academic school year to this question. In September, the weighted mean to this question was a 4.42; the weighted mean had the biggest increase from the September survey to the December survey, when it increased by 0.23 in December to 4.65. The December weighted mean was the highest of the school year. From December to February the weighted mean decreased by 0.05 to 4.6. The weighted mean increased by 0.01 from February to May when it received a final rating of 4.61. Participants’ satisfaction increased overall from September to May beginning at 4.42 in September with a standard deviation of 0.81 and ending in May at 4.61 with a standard deviation of 0.62. The standard deviation remained less than one throughout the entire year. The standard deviation was the lowest in December when the weighted mean was the highest, which indicates that participants felt the most emotionally supported in December. This could be a result of the semester ending and cohorts helping one another prepare for the next semester or to holiday gatherings such as the staff Christmas lunch. Overall, from

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The cohort mentoring model provides more support than the traditional one on one mentoring model.</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Mean</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
September to May, the weighted mean increased by 0.19. The final average of all participants’ responses to this question still fell between strongly agree (5) and agree (4) with an ending numerical weight of 4.61.

Emotional support was found to be one of the main benefits of being involved in a comprehensive induction program. The specific feedback provided by teachers was referenced when answering the first research question.

![Figure 4.7 Likert scale question line graph 3.](image)

Table 4.4 Likert Scale Question 3 Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I feel emotionally supported by the members of my cohort group.</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Mean</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher used the data generated from the fourth Likert scale question on the survey to determine if participants believed the new comprehensive induction
program with the cohort-mentoring model was achieving its intended purpose of providing better instructional support to beginning teachers. Figure 4.8 illustrates the changes in participants’ responses to this question over the course of the academic school year. In September, the weighted mean was a 4.06; the weighted mean increased by 0.42 in December to 4.48. The increase from September to December was the highest recorded increase. In December, one participant rated this question disagree (2) and was determined to be an outlier due to his or her z-score of -3.18. The weighted mean increased by 0.02 from December to February, when it was at its highest of 4.5. There were no outliers in February’s data. In May, the weighted mean decreased by 0.05 to 4.45. One participant rated the question disagree (2) in May, and this participant received a z-score of -3.18 and was identified as an outlier. Overall, from September to May, the weighted mean increased by 0.39. In May, the average of all participants’ responses to this question fell between strongly agree (5) and agree (4) with a numerical weight of 4.45. The standard deviation in May was 0.77. The standard deviation of participant responses remained less than one at each survey interval.

Figure 4.8 Likert scale question line graph 4.
The next Likert scale question on the survey was used to measure how frequently instruction was being discussed during the lunch meetings. Figure 4.9 illustrates how participants’ responses to this question changed over the course of the academic school year. In September, the weighted mean was 3.90; the weighted mean increased by 0.23 in December to 4.13. The increase from September to December was the largest increase recorded, and the weighted mean was measured at 4.13 again in February. Therefore, there was no increase or decrease from December to February. In May, the weighted mean decreased by 0.07 to 4.06. Overall, from September to May, the weighted mean increased by 0.16. The final measurement was taken in May, at which time the average of all participants’ responses to this question fell between strongly agree (5) and agree (4), with a numerical weight of 4.06. The standard deviation in May was 0.93. The standard deviation of participant responses remained less than one at each survey interval.

To validate the survey findings, three different members of the administrative team randomly observed lunch meetings. Each cohort was observed twice during semester one, the researcher was the only administrator to observe all five cohorts. The cohorts were not observed during the second semester due to schools switching to virtual learning in March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher did attend
cohort professional development lunches during second semester; however, she did not have an opportunity to silently observe before schools closed. Findings from observations reveal that Cohort Group 1 discussed instruction 68.14% of the allotted time in September and 65.23% of the allotted time in November. Cohort Group 2 discussed instruction 43.84% of the allotted time in September and 65.91% of the allotted time in November. Cohort Group 3 discussed instruction 98.78% of the allotted time in September and 84.60% of the allotted time in November. Cohort Group 4 discussed instruction 100% of the allotted time in September and 41.07% of the allotted time in November. Cohort Group 5 discussed instruction 61.05% of the allotted time in September and 72.73% of the allotted time in October.

Responses to open-ended survey questions revealed that teachers used their cohort meetings to discuss a variety of concepts related to instruction. Groups explained that they discussed classroom management tips and what strategies worked best on specific, individual students. Teachers cited this as another positive benefit of meeting with teachers in different disciplines; the reasoning was that some of them shared students and could provide insight and tips on how to more effectively teach individual students. One teacher stated, “I get to know my students better through my cohort.”

In a mid-year interview, a first-year, male teacher explained how receiving emotional support was fundamental and formed the foundation of the mentoring relationship. The first-year teacher said, “building the personal relationship helped all the other stuff fall into place. I’ve gotten to know the other teachers and we do stuff outside of school and it has helped a lot.” This level of comfort helped his group feel comfortable discussing instruction and the weaknesses in their teaching and instructional strategies.
Other survey respondents stated they discussed content standards, how to effectively communicate with parents, projects (including cross-curricular projects), in class activities, end of course testing, and how to keep students engaged.

![Figure 4.9 Likert scale question line graph](image)

**Table 4.6 Likert Scale Question 5 Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instruction is frequently discussed among members of my cohort group.</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Mean</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following Likert scale question’s purpose was to determine if members of each cohort felt like they related to and got along with the other members of their cohort group. The line graph in Figure 4.10 shows how participants’ responses changed over the course of the academic school year to this question. In September, the weighted mean was 4.42. The weighted mean showed the largest increase from the September survey to
the December survey, when it increased by 0.16 and measured at 4.58 in December.
From December to February, the weighted mean increased by 0.02 to 4.6. The weighted mean was the highest in May, when it increased by 0.08 for a final rating of 4.68.
Participants’ overall satisfaction increased from September to May. The weighted mean first measured at 4.42 in September with a standard deviation of 0.89 and ended at 4.68 in May with a standard deviation of 0.48, which was the lowest standard deviation of the year. The standard deviation remained less than one all year. Overall, from September to May, the weighted mean increased by 0.26. The final average of all participants’ responses to this question fell between strongly agree (5) and agree (4), with an ending numerical weight of 4.68. This was the question that received the second highest rating on the Likert scale surveys.

This question was designed to determine if homogenous or heterogeneous gender cohort groups worked best or if homogeneous or heterogeneous content area cohort groups were most satisfying. The researcher used the non-anonymous February survey to determine which cohorts gave the most positive ratings. Overall, only two teachers rated a question a three. One from a homogenous gender cohort and one from a homogenous content cohort. One of the teachers gave all negative ratings.

One beginning teacher described the relationship he had with his colleagues in his cohort group as a relationship where they could provide a “blunt honesty” and stated that the group had provided a sounding board and place to share ideas. A veteran teacher from Cohort Group 3, the homogenous content group, stated that she believed getting together in the cohort group really helped her whole department. She stated that she felt they could really relate to and talk to one another, and because they had been inviting other members
of the department to lunch, all of the teachers in the entire department now felt more comfortable going to one another.

During interviews, participants also shared things they were doing with their cohort members outside of the induction program requirements. Attending athletic events, going hunting, and having dinner at local restaurants were a few activities mentioned.

![Figure 4.10 Likert scale question line graph 6.](image)

**Table 4.7 Likert Scale Question 6 Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I feel like I relate to and get along well with the other members of my cohort group.</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Mean</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The subsequent Likert scale question’s purpose was to determine if teachers were pleased the mentoring program had been extended to provide teachers on an annual
contract and first-year continuing contract with a mentor. The line graph in Figure 4.11 shows how participants’ responses changed over the course of the academic school year to this question. This question was the only one with a standard deviation over one at three out of the four survey intervals. The higher standard deviation reveals a larger variance in participant responses. In September, the weighted mean was a 3.77 with a standard deviation of 1.09.

The weighted mean increased from the September survey to the December survey by .17 to an average of 3.94 with a standard deviation of 1.15, which was the biggest standard deviation for any question all year. From December to February the weighted mean had the biggest increase, when it increased by 0.33 to a 4.27. The standard deviation at the February survey was .94. The weighted mean was the highest in May when it increased by 0.02 to a final rating of 4.29. The final standard deviation was 1.07. One participant who rated the question strongly disagree (1) was given a z-score of -3.07 making this participant an outlier. Participants’ satisfaction increased overall by 0.52 from September to May beginning at 3.77 in September and ending in May at 4.29. The final average of all participants’ responses to this question fell between strongly agree (5) and agree (4), with an ending numerical weight of 4.29.

Second- and third-year teachers had a special role in the dynamic of the cohort group. They were being mentored, but at the same time they were providing guidance to first-year teachers as well. One beginning teacher stated that she felt like being in the cohort group was preparing her to become a mentor in the future; this is a sentiment other beginning teachers also shared during interviews. The beginning teacher stated that she
felt like she was beneficial to first year teachers because she would not be intimidating to a first-year teacher, and the challenges she felt as a first-year teacher were still fresh.

First-year teachers also recognized the benefit of working with second- and third-year teachers in the mentoring cohorts. Although the second- and third-year teachers were still being mentored, they were also serving as mentors to the first-year teachers as well. A first-year teacher stated that having second- and third-year teachers in the cohort group had been helpful because a lot of the things first-year teachers struggle with were still fresh on their minds.

While Second- and third-year teachers recognized that the training the model provided was preparing them to become mentors, first-year teachers also realized the model was beneficial in the development of mentor teachers. One beginning teacher said it was helpful to see mentor interactions with the first-year teachers because it would help them know what to do when they become mentors, and that this model allows them to gradually step into the role of being a mentor. When asked, many of the second- and third-year teachers stated that they were now interested in becoming mentors themselves.

Figure 4.11 Likert scale question line graph 7.
The next Likert scale question’s purpose was to determine if teachers enjoyed having lunch with their cohort groups. This was important information because the entire school’s lunch schedule was reorganized to allow each cohort group to have the same lunch. The line graph in Figure 4.12 shows how participants’ responses changed over the course of the academic school year to this question. In September, this question had a weighted mean of 3.61, the lowest of all the questions. However, the standard deviation was 1.17, which is the largest of all the questions at any interval, meaning there was a large degree of variance. Of the teachers, 11 also rated this question neutral (3) in September. The weighted mean increased by 0.55 from September to December and measured at 4.16. The increase from September to December was the largest increase in this question’s weighted mean over the four intervals. The one teacher who gave this question a rating of strongly disagree (1) received a z-score of -3.4 making him or her an outlier. In February, the weighted mean decreased by 0.03 to 4.13. One teacher, rated the question disagree (2) and this teacher was determined to be an outlier with a z-score of -3.23. In May, the weighted mean remained the same at 4.13; however, the number of teachers rating the question strongly agree (5) increased by two. Overall, the weighted
mean increased by 0.52 from September to May and ended with a weighted mean of 4.13 and a standard deviation of 0.99. This final rating fell between agree (4) and strongly agree (5) on the numerical scale that was used to determine teacher satisfaction.

One male veteran teacher said that the lunch meetings were odd at first, but they became a relaxed and positive time to sit down, eat lunch, and just talk. Another mentor teacher said they liked that the scheduled lunch meetings were persistent and consistent. A female mentor teacher who had been mentoring for nine years at the time of the study stated that the lunch meetings were a huge stress reliever for her. She said in the past, wondering if she had spent enough time with her mentees kept her up at night, but with the new program she no longer had to worry about whether she had seen her mentees enough that week. She said the structure of the new comprehensive program alleviates stress for mentor teachers and addresses many of the stressors associated with the previous mentoring model. Some examples of stressors associated with the previous mentoring model that teachers mentioned frequently in interviews and on surveys were a lack of time, lack of structure, and unorganized or non-existent professional development previously associated with mentoring.

In January, a beginning teacher talked about how the dynamics of the cohort lunches had changed throughout the year as teachers became more comfortable with one another. “My cohort members have gotten more comfortable; it is not awkward anymore, we come together more. This program has brought me to know more people at the school that I would not have gotten to know otherwise.”

On the open-ended survey questions, teacher responses reveal they enjoyed talking about their personal and professional lives during lunch with their cohort groups.
One group said their meetings started with professional discussions but ended on a more personal level. During interviews, all teacher participants that were interviewed stated that their cohort group was using the time at lunch effectively.

A first-year teacher said that he liked the cohort meetings during lunch because it kept teachers from having to get up early or miss after-school activities in which they are involved. He said the meetings were important because he felt that he received positive praise from the mentor teachers during the meetings, and that kept him from feeling defeated. “Seeing other teachers reassures me; I have become more confident, more confident in being able to teach the material.” Furthermore, when asked in the February survey, what do you like or dislike about the mentoring program, another teacher stated, “I have really enjoyed my cohort! Eating lunch together has become my favorite part of the day!”

![Figure 4.12 Likert scale question line graph 8.](image)

Figure 4.12 Likert scale question line graph 8.
Table 4.9. Likert Scale Question 8 Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>September</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Mean</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final Likert scale question was used to measure if teachers felt comfortable asking questions and seeking help from their cohort group. This was important, because feedback from the pilot study conducted at the end of the 2018-2019 school year revealed that some beginning teachers did not feel comfortable asking questions that might be viewed as “stupid” or something they should already know. This question got the highest ratings at each of the four survey intervals, and the standard deviation was less than one at each interval. In September, the weighted mean was 4.74, with a standard deviation of 0.63. The one teacher who disagreed and gave this question a rating of 2 in September, received a z-score of -4.4 and is considered to be an outlier. The weighted mean decreased by 0.03 from September to December when it was calculated to be 4.71. The standard deviation in December was 0.53, and the teacher who rated the question neutral (3) earned a z-score of -3.23 making them an outlier. The weighted mean showed the highest increase between the December and the February interval, when it increased by 0.06 to 4.77. The standard deviation was also the lowest in February and was 0.50. The teacher who rated this question neutral (3) had a z-score of -3.54 and considered an outlier. The weighted mean decreased by 0.06 from February to May, and it was recorded at 4.71 at the end of May with a standard deviation of 0.53. Again, one teacher rated this
question neutral and received a z-score of -3.23 making this teacher an outlier. The question began with a rating of 4.74 in September and ended with a rating of 4.71 at the end of May, meaning that the weighted numerical response to this question fell between strongly agree (5) and agree (4).

This finding was verified through responses on the survey questions, observations, and interview responses. On an open-ended question in the non-anonymous February survey, a veteran teacher said that her cohort group felt comfortable talking “about things honestly and openly, without fear of reprisals or negative feedback.”

During lunch observations, one administrator noted that Cohort Group 3 had strong collaboration and communication within the group. A different administrator observed Cohort Group 5 in November, when the district’s new work calendar was being presented and put to a vote. The district was in the process of determining if they would switch to a year-round schedule or keep the traditional schedule with a long summer break. The administrator noted that Cohort Group 5 had strong opinions but were comfortable disagreeing with one another and talking about their different perspectives. A beginning teacher from this cohort stated that she felt her cohort group and the changes to the induction program were great. She stated that she felt very comfortable and supported, and was certain there was no one in her group that she would feel too intimidated by to approach with questions. Furthermore, a beginning teacher from another cohort group stated that his group’s lunch meetings were informal and productive. He said they focused on specific issues with which each member was struggling, and he believed they all felt comfortable letting their guards down to share ideas and receive feedback. Other teachers shared similar sentiments. For example, on the
May survey, one mentor teacher said, “I feel that this enabled new teachers to feel comfortable asking questions. With us in a group, they get a wide variety of answers to how to handle different situations.”

![Figure 4.13 Likert scale question line graph 9.](image)

**Table 4.10 Likert Scale Question 9 Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>September</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Mean</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>4.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How Did Involvement in a Comprehensive Induction Program Increase the Retention Rate of Beginning Teachers at EVHS?**

The retention rate of both first-year and beginning teachers can be found in Table 4.11. The tables show the retention rates of both EVHS and the school district in which EVHS is affiliated. The tables show the data for the two years prior to the 2019-2020
school year as well as the data for the 2019-2020 school year, when the study was conducted. In 2017-2018, the district lost 24% of its first-year teachers and EVHS lost 18.1% of its first-year teachers. That same year, the district lost 20.1% of its beginning teachers while EVHS lost 14.3%. At the end of the 2018-2019 school year, the district lost 8% of its first-year teachers while EVHS lost 30% of its first-year teachers. The district also lost 8% of its beginning teachers at the end of the 2018-2019 school year, while EVHS lost 29.4% of its beginning teachers. The following year, the researcher implemented the more comprehensive induction program at EVHS. At the end of the 2019-2020 school year, the district lost 14.3% of its first-year teachers while EVHS lost 0% of its first-year teachers. EVHS did lose one teacher who was a first-year teacher; however, the teacher came to the school mid-year to be a temporary replacement for another teacher who moved to a different school in the district. In addition, this teacher was not a participant in the study. Because of these circumstances, the researcher did not include this teacher in any of her data. The district lost 14.3% of its beginning teachers at the end of the 2019-2020 school year while EVHS lost 5.5% of its beginning teachers. EVHS’s retention rate increased from the previous year by 30% for first-year teachers and 23.9% for beginning teachers after implementation in 2019-2020. One beginning teacher said in an interview that the new comprehensive induction program really helped him get through the year. Two beginning teachers were moved from EVHS to other schools in the district out of necessity, so the researcher did not include them in the number of teachers who chose to leave EVHS.
Table 4.11 Three-Year Retention Rate Data

**District Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Induction Teachers</th>
<th>Number of Induction Teachers that Left</th>
<th>Percentage of Induction Teachers Who Left</th>
<th>Number of Beginning Teachers</th>
<th>Number of Beginning Teachers Who Left</th>
<th>Percentage of Beginning Teachers Who Left</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017 - 2018</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 - 2019</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 - 2020</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Eagle Valley High School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Induction Teachers</th>
<th>Number of Induction Teachers that Left</th>
<th>Percentage of Induction Teachers Who Left</th>
<th>Number of Beginning Teachers</th>
<th>Number of Beginning Teachers Who Left</th>
<th>Percentage of Beginning Teachers Who Left</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017 - 2018</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 - 2019</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 - 2020</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COVID-19 and the Comprehensive Mentoring Program**

The 2019-2020 school year abruptly changed on March 13th when the state’s governor ordered all schools to move to eLearning, where they would remain for the remainder of the school year. On the May survey, the researcher wanted to find out if the new more comprehensive induction program was able to support teachers during this unchartered time. While this was not a research question going into the study, the researcher felt it was important to include an additional section to discuss how teachers viewed the support they received during distant learning. In May, teachers were asked if members of their cohort group reached out to them during the quarantine, 4 (12.9%) participants said that every member of their cohort group reached out during the quarantine, 11 (35.5%) participants said most of their cohort members reached out to them, 15 (48.4%) participants said that some of their cohort group members reached out...
to them, and 1 (3.2%) participant said that no one reached out to them. This one participant was the only one who said that no one reached out. This participant did identify the department in which they were assigned, and it is consistent with the participant who gave negative feedback throughout the entirety of the study.

Teachers were also given the opportunity to respond to an open-ended question asking how the program helped them during the quarantine. Participants discussed having less stress, a more positive outlook, and more access to resources because of the program. One mentor teacher said, “I think it was helpful for the mentees because we had spent time establishing these relationships this year. I strongly believe they would have had much higher stress if these cohort relationships had not been nurtured this school year.” A beginning teacher said, “The program, and interaction with other teachers outside of the mentor program gave me the assurance needed to keep moving forward during this difficult period.”

**Interpretation of the Data**

Collaborative groups are more likely to be successful when all the members of the group contribute, feel valued, are vested, and care about the outcome (Stewart, 2014). The data from the all-female cohort, Cohort Group 1, and the all-male cohort, Cohort Group 2, suggests that teachers most enjoyed working in homogenous groups. These two groups had other teachers join them, and they continued to have lunch together beyond the requirements of the program. Based on data from surveys, interviews, and observations, those two groups became the most bonded and were the most satisfied overall with the program. This suggests that gender or gender identity does play a role in the success of mentoring pairings or groups. With the exception of two teachers, all other
participants agreed or strongly agreed that they got along well with other members of their cohort groups. The observable bond within each of those two groups suggests that having more homogenous groups works best. Cohort One and Cohort Two were both homogenous in gender, one all-female and one all male, and both of these two groups were a mixture of English and social studies teachers with the exception of one science teacher in Cohort Group 1.

Data from observations, interviews, and survey responses revealed that both male and female teachers felt comfortable freely discussing their weaknesses due to the emotional connections formed among group members. This shows an emotional bond is a key component that must be present in the mentoring relationship for it to be successful. Therefore, when creating mentoring pairings or cohort groups, it is important to ensure that teachers have time to develop the foundational relationships needed to build trust so that members will be open to feedback and mutual collaboration. Results from the study indicate that when teachers feel comfortable and emotionally supported, they are more open to being developed instructionally and collaborating with colleagues and giving and receiving feedback.

In the beginning, some teachers described the lunch meetings as awkward at first until the group became more comfortable with one another. The researcher believes this is evident from the increase in the weighted mean from September to December on the Likert scale question that measured if teachers enjoyed having lunch with their cohort group. This indicates that this initiative did take time to become a part of the culture of the cohort groups, and it is essential that any school planning to adopt this initiative must ensure to have strong, engaged school leaders who will support the program in the initial
phases of implementation. Also, 11 teachers were neutral on this question in September before they had time to form an opinion. While not every teacher said they enjoyed having lunch with their cohort groups, the vast majority of negative feedback was insignificant. Some of the teachers who gave negative feedback complained about having to walk to lunch. Some of the teachers that did not agree or strongly agree that they enjoyed having lunch with their cohort said that it was because they were not given free food and candy at the meetings. Finally, the third complaint was that it was a lot of additional work for teachers who were teaching four blocks. This is the only complaint the researcher found valid, and it is important for teachers to be reminded of the mentoring commitment prior to agreeing to taking on this role. Teachers are paid to teach four blocks and to mentor; therefore, they should be aware of this time commitment before agreeing to either.

Time is always an important commodity, and we need to be mindful of this when asking teachers to commit to performing extra duties or activities. When trying to create time for cohort groups to meet, lunch was the optimal time because everyone generally tends to take the time to eat, and once the schedules were rearranged, it created a common time during the workday that teachers could meet. One beginning teacher pointed out that he enjoyed meeting during lunch because it prevented teachers from having to come in early or stay late. The beginning teachers in this study seemed to feel more comfortable taking advantage of the allotted time since they did not have to feel like they were keeping another teacher late or forcing them to come in early. When planning times for teachers to meet, using time they are required to be at work, like lunch, was found to be a good option.
There were some weeks during the school year that the researcher sent a topic for the cohort groups to focus on at lunch. Data collected from interviews and surveys revealed that cohort groups liked the added structure of having a designated topic. Therefore, when implementing this program, the program lead should work with mentor teachers to determine big umbrella ideas to focus on each month during the school year. The teachers at EVHS suggested classroom management as a topic for the first month of school. Once the topic was selected, the program leader was then able to suggest important points on which mentor teachers could focus. Based on the feedback received from participants in this study, the researcher would recommend having a big idea to focus on each month with at least one structured lunch. The researcher thinks it is important to not assign an agenda to every lunch meeting so that it does not feel like a chore or forced professional development every time the group members are together. Having some casual time to bond and connect emotionally proved to be important based on participant feedback.

**Conclusion**

The researcher put the transcribed interviews and open-ended survey responses into a word cloud to see what words were used the most to describe participant experiences with the mentoring program. The most used words were the following: cohort group, new, different, advice, reassurance, voices, ideas, share, talk, and positive. Other words that appeared on the word cloud were as follows: love, solid, perfect, friendships, goals, expectations, proud, safe, improved, laugh, and honest. Overall, the majority of participants gave positive feedback on the new more comprehensive induction program implemented at EVHS. From the open coding and axial coding, six
themes from the qualitative data emerged. These themes were that the more comprehensive induction program reduced feelings of isolation and led to improved classroom management and instructional epistemology (capacity building). The more comprehensive induction program created space for building meaningful and positive relationships, the potential for mentors to model for one another in a group setting, increased feedback from multiple mentors, and overall more comprehensive support. Teachers liked the structure, the allotted time, and the multiple perspectives from their community. Some teachers gave negative feedback, and even though three of the four surveys were anonymous, the wording of the complaints led the researcher to reason it was the same participants consistently giving negative feedback. Overall, the researcher feels the program was successful based on the beginning teacher retention rate and the data garnered from interviews, surveys, and observations.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem of practice addressed in this study is that beginning teachers are not being provided the support they need to be successful in the classroom. The education system in America is underperforming and improving teacher quality is one way to improve the system as a whole (Hall & Simeral, 2017). The studies presented in Chapter 2 reveal that retaining and improving the quality of teachers, especially in historically disadvantaged districts, would have the greatest success in improving the quality of education our nation’s youth is receiving. These studies also reveal that being in a comprehensive induction program provides teachers with the support they need to have better student outcomes and higher levels of job satisfaction. Therefore, it is imperative that we determine the best design for these induction programs in order to meet teachers’ needs and improve teacher quality. Teacher quality must improve, because “teacher – quality and quality instruction is the number one determinant of student success” (Hall & Simeral, 2017, p. 6). In order to help our students succeed, schools must ensure quality educators in every classroom in every school. The first step in doing this is by stemming the tide of teacher turnover. One way to keep teachers in the profession is by providing them better support and getting them connected to other teachers in the building.
Research Questions

This study specifically addressed one main research question and three sub questions. The questions addressed were:

1. What impact does involvement in a comprehensive mentoring program for beginning teachers have on participants?
   a. How does using a cohort model of mentoring impact overall teacher satisfaction?
   b. How did teacher perceptions of the newly implemented program change over the course of the academic school year?
   c. How does involvement in a comprehensive induction program increase the retention rate of beginning teachers at EVHS?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if beginning teachers, who were a part of a comprehensive cohort model mentoring program, felt better supported both, with instruction and emotionally, and if participation in the program would reduce teacher turnover rates in the school.

According to Mart (2013), the interaction between teachers is one of the factors that determines the level of commitment and dedication that a teacher will have to his or her school. Therefore, as this study’s data reveals, a comprehensive induction program that creates communities of practice through a cohort group mentoring model has the potential to have a significant impact on a teacher’s commitment to his or her school.
Summary of the Study

Results Related to Existing Literature

The findings from this study revealed that teachers appreciated the structure the more comprehensive mentoring program provided, and suggested providing more structure as an improvement. The findings also revealed that teachers in homogenous cohort groups bonded better. This was evident in observations and interviews. These teachers could be seen spending time together at school events, walking around the school together, and talking about doing things outside of school together. This finding of teachers working better in homogenous cohort groups supports the study conducted by Bruno et al. (2019) discussed in Chapter 2. Their findings revealed that teachers were happier when they worked with teachers who were demographically similar to themselves.

A finding from this study that was not consistent with Glazerman et al.’s (2010) study was that the comprehensive induction program did appear to influence the teacher retention rate where Glazerman et al. (2010) did not believe there was a correlation. However, in this study the teacher retention rate did increase for the school that implemented the program. Therefore, this finding supports the two studies conducted by Richard Ingersoll in 2012 and in 2004. In addition to finding that comprehensive induction programs have a positive impact on teacher retention, another similarity in findings from Ingersoll’s (2012) study and this study was the positive impact induction programs have on a teacher’s ability to manage the classroom, use effective questioning practices, and use a variety of strategies in instructional plans.
The findings from this study suggest that teachers felt like their cohort groups were safe and supportive spaces. Teachers indicated on surveys and in interviews that they were pleased with the program and level of support they were receiving at EVHS. These findings are similar to those of Seagraves (2018) when she discovered that teachers were more satisfied when they felt supported by colleagues and administration. Seagraves (2018) recommended finding time during the school day to allow teachers to collaborate. The researcher did this by giving teachers a common lunch with their cohort groups and their departments. Teachers did reveal that they appreciated the time to meet during the day, and new teachers indicated that they would not want to feel as if they were intruding on mentor teachers’ personal time by having them come in early or stay late on their behalf.

The Glazerman et al. (2010) and Ingersoll (2010) studies both found that comprehensive induction had a positive impact on student achievement when implemented consistently with fidelity. This study, however, could not add to the database on student achievement because student achievement data from standardized tests could not be collected at the end of the 2019-2020 school year due to the cancelation of state tests such as the end of course exam. In addition, the Glazerman et al. (2010) study followed teachers and students from the comprehensive program for three years to attain the student achievement data. Due to the duration of this study being one year, the researcher did not collect student achievement data.

This study also corroborates Alexander and Alexander’s (2019) recommendation that induction programs must meet teacher’s emotional needs. Teachers reported feeling emotionally supported by their cohort groups and stated that this emotional support laid
the foundation for the instructional support to take place. It allowed teachers to be vulnerable and comfortable discussing areas for improvement and things they were struggling with in the classroom. Alexander and Alexander (2019) also suggested providing teachers with time to observe, plan, and receive feedback. This was accomplished by taking away duties for first-year and mentor teachers to allow them time to observe and reflect together. In interviews, teachers described how they had benefited from these observations and reflections. Additionally, some second-year teachers discussed how they would have really benefited from the duty of observing their first-year had they been given the opportunity to do so in the former mentoring model.

Finally, this study supports Lisa Paris’s (2013) finding that mentors help novice teachers successfully navigate their first years of teaching. This finding was solidified by the comments from beginning teachers expressing their gratitude to their mentors in the open-ended survey questions. For example, some new teachers discussed how the support from their mentors helped them navigate the eLearning phase of the 2019-2020 school year.

Beginning teachers want and need an encouraging mentor who understands the importance of being approachable, understanding, collaborative, and willing to share his or her knowledge on curriculum, procedures, and best practices. When designing an induction program, allotting time for teachers to observe and collaborate is essential.

**Major Points of the Study and Revelations**

There were six themes that emerged from the qualitative data gathered from participant responses to interview and survey questions and observations. The first theme is that being involved in the more comprehensive program, which utilized a team
approach to mentoring negated feelings of isolation. Teacher participants believed that feelings of isolation were assuaged through the emotional support provided by the members of their cohort groups and through the sense of community formed among them. The second theme is that this involvement also improved teachers’ classroom management and instructional epistemology (capacity building). Participants thought the program helped teachers build their skills of classroom management and instructional strategies by holding them more accountable and by affording the opportunity to collaborate with others whereby developing classroom management skills through discussion, learning how to differentiate instruction, and implement various instructional strategies. In addition, the program provided the means of pooling resources, which also helped build teacher capacity. The third theme from the data is that the more comprehensive induction model created space for building meaningful and positive relationships, the fourth theme from the data is that the more comprehensive induction made it possible for mentors to learn from one another through modeling in a group setting. The fifth theme the qualitative data revealed is that the more comprehensive induction model increased the amount of quality feedback by giving beginning teachers access to multiple mentors. The sixth and final theme to emerge is that the program provided more overall comprehensive support.

Additionally, the quantitative data revealed that teachers’ overall satisfaction with the mentoring program increased from September to May based on data from the Likert scale questions. Responses to these questions indicated teachers were satisfied with the program, felt it was more supportive than the traditional one-on-one model, believed that it provided both emotional and instructional support, thought that instruction was
frequently being discussed during meetings, felt as if they related to their cohort group members, were pleased that the program was extended to include annual and first-year continuing contract teachers, enjoyed having lunch with their cohort group, and felt that it was a safe place to ask and answer questions. After the first year of implementation, the retention rate of both induction and beginning teacher participants at the school increased, and the school’s retention rate was higher than that of the district. Participants also stated that the sense of community that had been developed prior to the instructional model switching from face-to-face to completely eLearning, helped them cope with their stress and gave them reassurance during a very unprecedented and challenging time.

**Action Plan**

The researcher will share the results of this study with the school administration. Based on the positive results, the researcher plans to continue to employ this style of comprehensive mentoring at her school. Alexander and Alexander (2019) recommended that school districts provide a standardized mentoring program in all schools in the event a teacher transfers from one school to another. This is somewhat common within the researcher’s school district as two teachers transferred to other schools within the district at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Therefore, the researcher will share the program with any school administrators that want to learn more about the comprehensive induction program and assist with implementation when needed. Another part of the action plan is to reach full implementation at EVHS again during the 2021-2022 school year. The program was not functioning at full capacity during the 2020-2021 school year due to COVID restrictions. Teachers had to eat lunch in their classrooms with their third
block students so the common lunchtime was not an option. In addition, teachers were encouraged not to gather in groups due to the risk of spreading the virus.

The researcher will also provide key personnel within the University of South Carolina who are interested in and working on teacher development with a copy of these findings. The researcher will share a copy of this research study with people at the University who are making key decisions about teacher retention and development. This will help the findings of this study circulate to more people who may be interested.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on data garnered from this action research study, the researcher made four recommendations for induction programs. First, induction programs should be fully supported by the school administration and veteran mentor teachers who are serving as mentors. For the program to be successful, it must be monitored and supported. School administrators must ensure that the mentor teachers have the supplies and resources they need to help beginning teachers. In addition, the school administration has to support those involved with professional development opportunities. This can be accomplished through multiple methods. For example, the administrator over the program may give mentor teachers articles and timelines that pertain to the development of beginning teachers. The administration may also schedule guest speakers such as the ESOL team or district level director to come speak with teachers on how to better support EL students. Teachers at the school could also be sent to conferences and then present the information obtained at the conference to the group when they return. The administration should ask the teachers what professional development they want and then try to schedule them to attend professional developments on those topics.
Mentor teachers must also be fully committed to their role. Mentoring is difficult and time consuming, so the teachers selected must have a passion for helping others and possess the attributes deemed important. At the school of study, it was determined that mentor teachers should be an encouraging individual who recognizes the importance of being approachable, understanding, collaborative, and willing to share his or her knowledge on curriculum, procedures, and best practices. Therefore, providing mentors who possess these qualities is an integral part of the induction program’s vision, and teachers, who do not embody these qualities, should not be asked to mentor. Acquiring commitment and support from all stakeholders is essential to the program and its mission.

The second suggestion for practice is to build communities of practices within the induction program instead of using the traditional one-on-one mentoring model. When building communities of practices, it is important to consider the personalities and demographics of each person to create the most successful cohort. Data from the study indicates the two characteristics, most beneficial to a cohort’s success, are gender and content area. The cohort groups that were more homogenous tended to bond better. The all-female cohort group and the all-male cohort group bonded the best, followed by Cohort Three which was homogenous in content area. Therefore, a commonality among group members is important. In order to prevent cohorts from becoming “cliques” it is important to find opportunities for them to come together as a large community of practice. In this study, professional development opportunities like the ESOL PD provided an opportunity for groups to come together. In addition, teachers from each cohort group can go and lead professional developments with other cohort groups besides their own.
The third suggestion for practice is to allot time during the school day for cohort groups to meet and collaborate, which is another reason full administrative support is critical to the success of a comprehensive induction program. For example, lunches were rearranged at the school where this study took place. Originally, teachers’ lunch schedules were based on what area of the school their classrooms were located. However, this was changed to ensure that teachers in the same department shared a common lunch period. Once all the members of each department had the same lunch, the makeup of each cohort group was used to determine which departments also needed to be given the same lunch period. For example, if a cohort was made up of English and social studies teachers, then it was necessary to ensure that both the English and social studies departments shared the same lunch period. This was beneficial because it gave teachers time to meet and collaborate during the day without having to come in before school or stay late. In addition, the 2018-2019 pilot study revealed that some beginning teachers had eaten lunch by themselves, in their classrooms throughout the entire 2018-2019 school year. The new lunch schedule, adopted for the 2019-2020 school year, ensured that teachers had interactions with other adults during the day and had the opportunity to become a part of a group of teachers. In order to create a collaborative culture within a school, sufficient time and opportunities must be provided for teachers to “meet together and establish a learning climate that values and welcomes honesty and courage to share teaching practices….as well as a level of vulnerability that serves to strengthen the emotional bonds of the group as they work from a place of empathy and care” (Kelly & Cherkowski, 2015, p. 21).
The fourth suggestion for having a successful induction program is to get feedback from those directly impacted by the program. During the action research process, the feedback the researcher obtained from participants during the study was used to monitor the program and make adjustments to improve it and make it more beneficial for those involved. Teachers know what is working and what needs to be improved. Listening to their feedback and using it to make adjustments is important and gives teachers a voice in something that directly impacts their lives. Suggestions that were made by the participants were used to make the comprehensive induction program better.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

While this study yielded positive results, especially regarding teacher satisfaction and retention, there is still much to be studied. Because this study was a one-year study and data on student achievement was not available, more research needs to be done on how a cohort model of mentoring impacts student achievement. Ideally, a longitudinal study that measures the growth in a teacher’s student achievement data over a three-year period would be conducted. In addition, more research on teacher retention should be conducted over a longer period. Finally, a study to confirm that cohort groups work best together when the members are demographically similar would garner data that could further validate the findings from this study.

**Conclusion**

“It is clear that effective teachers have a profound influence on student achievement and ineffective teachers do not” (Hall & Simeral, 2017, p. 7). One reason that mentoring and mentor selection is critical to teachers’ development and student achievement, is that mentors must help novice teachers move through their ZPD. When a
mentoring program is scaffolded over three years, it allows the beginning teacher more time to work with and collaborate with the more knowledgeable other before the official mentoring relationship concludes. Mentoring through communities of practice is valuable because “collaboration among teachers allows multiple zones of proximal development to be formed where various types of expertise may be shared and internalized, resulting in instructional practices that are more fully based on a comprehensive view of each student” (Enu, 2011, p. 325). Each member of the community of practice has different skills and areas of expertise; therefore, a veteran teacher can still be a novice in some aspects of his or her skill set. Therefore, the collaborative relationships formed within the mentoring cohort groups moves both veteran and beginning teachers through their ZPDs.

“The teacher shortage constitutes a crisis because of its negative effects on students, teachers, and the education system at large. This crisis calls for urgent, comprehensive, and sustainable policy solutions” (Garcia & Weiss, 2019, p. 2). A comprehensive induction program has the potential to address these needs and improve the system for all stakeholders. When implementing an induction program, it is important to “consider the emotional aspects that are also a part of teachers’ professional lives” (Enu, 2011). Mentoring that transpires in cohort groups engaged as communities of practice can help teachers navigate the demands placed on them as well as the daily challenges of the classroom. “No one will argue with the fact that teaching is an academically challenging and emotionally stressful work” (Enu, 2011, p. 328). The fact that this is widely recognized means that schools must address the problem of practice outlined in this study and ensure that beginning teachers are receiving the support they
need to stay in the classroom. A teacher’s experience should not be one of solitude and isolation.
REFERENCES


https://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/docs/research_reports/teachers Voices/Teachers_voices_8.pdf#page=15


https://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may01/vol58/num08/The-Benefits-of-Mentoring.aspx


https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1134&amp;context=gse_pubs


https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1109&amp;context=cpre_researchreports

https://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/216/342


https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/cjeap/article/view/42876


Mawhinney, L., & Rinke, C. (2019). *There has to be a better way: Lessons from former urban teachers.* Rutgers University Press.


https://www.simplypsychology.org/likert-scale.html


https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED479764


National Associated of State Boards of Education.
https://www.nasbe.org/project/teacher-induction/


TNTP. (2012). The irreplaceables.


APPENDIX A

“THINGS WE WISH WE KNEW AS FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS” DOCUMENT

Appendix A is a copy of the document that first-year teachers shared with the researcher at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. Induction Teachers shared a list of things they wish they had known as first year teachers.

Things we wish we knew as first-year teachers:

- New hire meetings
  - Go over rules (For example: dress code, where can’t students be at certain times, lunch duty guidelines)
- Referral System
  - What is a major/minor?
  - A breakdown for each category
    - Or examples of common referrals
- Contacts (Maybe like a cheat sheet)
  - Who do we call
    - when we need a janitor?
    - When we need a student removed?
    - When we will be late to school?
    - When we have a doctors appt or need to leave school during planning?
- Lunch
  - How do we set up a lunch account in the cafeteria? Or even just get lunch?
- Lesson Plans
  - Is there a template?
  - What all needs to be on there?
- Communication about expectations as teachers
- Fire drill (go over a simplified version of the manual)
- Pep rallies
- Graduation
- Eagle tickets
- Duties
- Map of the school, with areas labeled and office of administrators labeled
APPENDIX B

PILOT STUDY SURVEY FOR INDUCTION TEACHERS

*Appendix B is the survey sent to induction teachers during the pilot study in May of 2019.*

---

**Induction Teacher Survey**

Teachers,

Please take time to complete the short survey attached honestly and thoughtfully. Your answers will be anonymous. I am in the process of doing research on ways to improve our mentoring program and your answers will provide me with a starting point and insight into what both mentors and their mentees feel is working and what is not working.

Your name will not be associated with your responses.

* Required

How many years of teaching experience do you have? *

Your answer

What qualities do you believe a good mentor should have? *

Your answer

How many times did your mentor meet with you this school year? *

Your answer

I feel that I had a properly trained and highly effective mentor. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScb9WvLsE5YTYni27k9Nv_siwAueiKjneAeNiFuzq_qd_4lQOk-rOGMwXeXfRm
I felt comfortable asking my mentor for help/advice. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree 〇 〇 〇 〇 〇 Strongly Agree

My mentor helped me with lesson plans. (As a standard practice, not just on occasion.) *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree 〇 〇 〇 〇 〇 Strongly Agree

My mentor helped me with classroom management. (As a standard practice, not just on occasion.) *

1 2 3 4 5

〇 〇 〇 〇 〇

I would feel comfortable calling my mentor on the phone after hours if I had a question or needed to talk. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree 〇 〇 〇 〇 〇 Strongly Agree

When my mentor observed me, he or she provided me with high quality feedback to improve instruction. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree 〇 〇 〇 〇 〇 Strongly Agree
My mentor observed me regularly. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Overall, I feel like my assigned mentor was valuable to my success this school school. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

In general, I felt comfortable asking questions if I did not know the answer. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Why did you feel or not feel comfortable asking questions? *

Your answer

I believe teachers should be mentored into their 2nd and 3rd years of teaching. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScobotN9wY72b6x_9wAueXJheAenFFp_qd4RQ0K___rOQ_viewform
I would be willing to participate in group activities outside of school hours to build a strong community of practice among mentors and novice teachers. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

What activities would you enjoy participating in, or think would be helpful to build a strong community of practice? (Ex: ice cream social before the school year, dinner once each semester, a Christmas party, etc.) *

Your answer

Would it benefit you to have a mentor during your second and third years of teaching? *

☐ Yes
☐ No

How can administration better support new teachers? *

Your answer

What was most helpful to you this year? *

Your answer

Do you have any other feedback about the mentoring program? *

Your answer
APPENDIX C

PILOT STUDY SURVEY FOR MENTOR TEACHERS

*Appendix C is the survey sent to mentor teachers during the pilot study in May of 2019.*

Mentor Survey

Please take time to complete the short survey attached honestly and thoughtfully. Your answers will be anonymous. I am in the process of doing research on ways to improve our mentoring program and your answers will provide me with a starting point and insight into what both mentors and their mentees feel is working and what is not working.

Your name will not be associated with your responses.

* Required

**How many years of teaching experience do you have?**

Your answer

**How many years have you been a mentor?**

Your answer

**What qualities do you believe make a good mentor?**

Your answer

**What do you see as your primary responsibility as a mentor?**

Your answer

**How many times did you meet with your mentee this school year?**

Your answer
I have been properly trained to be a mentor. *

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly Disagree    Strongly Agree

I feel comfortable asking others' advice on how to best support my mentee. *

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly Disagree    Strongly Agree

I feel that I have been a good mentor to my mentee this school year.

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly Disagree    Strongly Agree

I helped my mentee with lesson plans. (As a standard practice, not just on occasion)

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly Disagree    Strongly Agree

I helped my mentee with classroom management. (As a standard practice, not just on occasion.)

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly Disagree    Strongly Agree
My mentee would feel comfortable calling me on the phone after hours if they had a problem/question and wanted to talk. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

I observed my mentee and provided him/her with high quality feedback to improve instruction.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

How many times did you observe your mentee and provide them with high quality feedback to improve instruction?

Your answer

I see my role as a mentor as being critical and of extreme importance to the success of my mentee. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

If my support was the determining factor in whether or not my mentee continued teaching, I feel he or she would continue to teach?

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree
I checked with my mentee to make sure he or she felt supported. I asked what was needed, etc.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

I believe that teachers should be mentored into their 2nd and 3rd years of teaching.*

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

I would be willing to participate in group activities outside of school hours to build a strong community of practice among mentors and novice teachers.*

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

What activities would you enjoy participating in, or think would be helpful to build a strong community of practice? (EX: ice cream social before the school year, dinner once each semester, a Christmas party, etc.)*

Your answer

What training would be beneficial to you as a mentor?*

Your answer
How can administration best support you in your critical role as a mentor? *

Your answer

How many mentees do you think a mentor can have and still be able to provide him or her with the support he or she needs? *

- [ ] 1
- [ ] 2
- [ ] 3

Do you have any other feedback about the mentoring program?

Your answer

SUBMIT

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.
APPENDIX D

COHORT LUNCH OBSERVATION FORM

Appendix D is a copy of the observation form the administrators used to observe cohort group lunch meetings.

*Cohort Group #: _________  Date:__________  Observer:__________

Contribution Code: W (work) P (Personal) F (Family) S (Sports) O (Other)
*If other make a note of what other is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Member (Last Name)</th>
<th>Contribution Code (When the group member makes a contribution, write down the contribution code in this box by his or her name.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EX: Blue</td>
<td>W P F O (grocery) S W W W W W W F F F F F W W W W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How are the group members arranged in the room?

Topics of Conversation:
Flow: (What time do they come in, how does the lunch progress? Do they start quiet and end by talking more? Do they start with work conversations and end with more personal conversations?)

Collaboration: (Examples of collaboration)

Other:

Takeaways: (What was the atmosphere of the room? How do you feel the members get along or relate? What lead you to feel this way? Was the conversation candid or altered because you were there? What was said to give you this impression?)
Appendix E is a copy of the survey sent to participants in September (end of interim one) and December (end of interim two). The survey was anonymous in September and December.

**September Survey**

1. I am happy with the mentoring program. *
   * Mark only one oval.
   
   1 2 3 4 5
   
   Strongly Disagree       Strongly Agree

2. The cohort mentoring model provides more support than the traditional one on one mentoring model. *
   * Mark only one oval.
   
   1 2 3 4 5
   
   Strongly Disagree       Strongly Agree

3. I feel emotionally supported by the members of my cohort group. *
   * Mark only one oval.
   
   1 2 3 4 5
   
   Strongly Disagree       Strongly Agree
4. I feel instructionally supported by the members of my cohort group.*
   
   *Mark only one oval.

   1  2  3  4  5

   Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  Strongly Agree

5. I feel like I relate to and get along with the other members of my cohort group.*
   
   *Mark only one oval.

   1  2  3  4  5

   Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  Strongly Agree

6. I am pleased that the mentoring program was expanded to provide teachers on an annual contract and teachers on a first year continuing contract with a mentor.*
   
   *Mark only one oval.

   1  2  3  4  5

   Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  Strongly Agree

7. I enjoy having lunch with my cohort group.*
   
   *Mark only one oval.

   1  2  3  4  5

   Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  Strongly Agree
8. Instruction is frequently discussed among members of my cohort group. *

Mark only one oval.

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   Strongly Disagree     Strongly Agree

9. I feel like my cohort group is a safe place to ask questions. *

Mark only one oval.

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   Strongly Disagree     Strongly Agree

10. Why do you like or dislike the cohort mentoring model? *

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

11. How does your cohort group use the common lunch period? *

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
12. How can the program be improved? *


13. Other feedback


APPENDIX F

FEBRUARY PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Appendix F is the survey sent in February after interim three. The Google Form collected respondents’ email addresses making it no longer anonymous. Participants were informed. This was done to learn how teachers with varying years of experience felt about the program.

![Survey Image]
5. I feel emotionally supported by the members of my cohort group. 

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree    Strongly Agree

6. I feel instructionally supported by the members of my cohort group. 

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree    Strongly Agree

7. I feel like I relate to and get along with the other members of my cohort group. 

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree    Strongly Agree

8. I am pleased that the mentoring program was expanded to provide teachers on an annual contract and teachers on a first year continuing contract with a mentor. 

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree    Strongly Agree
9. I enjoy having lunch with my cohort group. *

*Mark only one oval.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Instruction is frequently discussed among members of my cohort group. *

*Mark only one oval.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. I feel like my cohort group is a safe place to ask questions. *

*Mark only one oval.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. Why do you like or dislike the cohort mentoring model? *

---

---

---

---
13. How does your cohort group use the common lunch period? 

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

14. How can the program be improved? 

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

15. If applicable: Do you want to be a mentor next year? 

*Mark only one oval.*

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not applicable (Less than 3 years of teaching experience)

16. Other feedback 

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX G

MAY PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Appendix G is the survey sent out in May after interim four and the end of the school year. This survey was anonymous and participants were made aware. It was designed to also collect data about the program and its usefulness during the pandemic shutdown.

1. Number of years teaching *

2. I am happy with the mentoring program. *
   Mark only one oval.
   1 2 3 4 5
   Strongly Disagree    Strongly Agree

3. The cohort mentoring model provides more support than the traditional one on one mentoring model. *
   Mark only one oval.
   1 2 3 4 5
   Strongly Disagree    Strongly Agree

4. I feel emotionally supported by the members of my cohort group. *
   Mark only one oval.
   1 2 3 4 5
   Strongly Disagree    Strongly Agree
5. I feel instructionally supported by the members of my cohort group.

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

6. I feel like I relate to and get along with the other members of my cohort group.

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

7. I am pleased that the mentoring program was expanded to provide teachers on an annual contract and teachers on a first year continuing contract with a mentor.

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

8. I enjoy having lunch with my cohort group.

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree
9. **Instruction is frequently discussed among members of my cohort group.**

   *Mark only one oval.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. **I feel like my cohort group is a safe place to ask questions.**

   *Mark only one oval.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. **Why do you like or dislike the cohort mentoring model?**

   
   
   
   

12. **How does your cohort group use the common lunch period?**
13. How did your cohort group help you during the e-Learning phase of the school year?

14. Did members of your cohort group reach out to you during the quarantine? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes-all of them did.
☐ Yes-most of them did.
☐ Yes-some of them did.
☐ No-no one from my cohort group check in with me during the quarantine.
☐ Other: ____________________________

15. Did your group meet during the quarantine? If so, did you use zoom, google meet, or in person socially distanced?

____________________________________
____________________________________
____________________________________
APPENDIX H

EXPECTATIONS AND GUIDELINES

Appendix H is the handout participants were given at the start of the 2019-2020 school year to explain expectations and guidelines for their duties in the program.

Mentor Duty Expectations and Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort 1</th>
<th>Cohort 2</th>
<th>Cohort 3</th>
<th>Cohort 4</th>
<th>Cohort 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PARINDJG - Room #</td>
<td>PARANCJ - Room #</td>
<td>PARFYCRE - Room #</td>
<td>PARINDKW - Room #</td>
<td>PARINDKM - Room #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARANCV - Room #</td>
<td>PARANBS - Room #</td>
<td>PARANSH - Room #</td>
<td>PARFYCCP - Room #</td>
<td>PARFYCBD - Room #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARFYCAW - Room #</td>
<td>PARINDMS - Room #</td>
<td>PARINDJG - Room #</td>
<td>PARINDAJW - Room #</td>
<td>PARFYCTR - Room #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARINDML - Room #</td>
<td></td>
<td>PARFYCKH - Room #</td>
<td></td>
<td>PARFYCAP - Room #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PARANEM - Room #</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mentor Teacher 30 Minute Daily Duty Description**

Mentor Teachers should designate 30 minutes each day to supporting a novice teacher. The primary focus for mentor teachers is his or her own cohort group, but during the Fall Semester, no mentor teachers from Cohort 3 have a planning period, so after you have supported each novice within your cohort group, please spend your extra days helping to support the novice teachers in cohort 3. If you are a special education mentor, please observe novice teachers in other cohort groups to help with special education accommodations and supporting special education students.

The mentor must observe and post conference with at least one person in his or her cohort group each week, but designate 30 minutes each day to supporting other novice teachers. Mentor teachers should ask the novice teachers how they can best help him or her.

**Ways to support novice teachers include, but are not limited to:**
1. Observing and post conferencing
2. Lesson Planning/technology integration
3. Co-Teaching
4. Reviewing lesson plans and offering ways to scaffold or differentiate assignments for high- level and low- level learners
5. Discussing classroom management strategies
6. Helping to organize the classroom

Mentor teachers will also bring professional development ideas to administration based on observations.

Quarterly, mentors will turn in a log of support. The log will be provided through Google Docs. Submit the form electronically on the following dates: September 20th, November 15th, February 14th, and April 24th.

**Observation Schedule for First-Year Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VT1- Room #</td>
<td>VT4- Room #</td>
<td>PARVMTSP- Room #</td>
<td>PARVMTWM- Room #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VT2- Room #</td>
<td>VT5- Room #</td>
<td>PARVMTKT- Room #</td>
<td>PARVMTTD- Room #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARVMTLS-Room #</td>
<td>PARVMTJM- Room #</td>
<td>PARVMTPW- Room #</td>
<td>PARVMTWR- Room #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARVMTKS-Room #</td>
<td>PARVMTLA- Room #</td>
<td>PARVMTMH- Room #</td>
<td>PARVMTTR- Room #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VT3- Room #</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 19-Aug 23</td>
<td>PARINDJJ</td>
<td>PARINDMS</td>
<td>PARINDML</td>
<td>PARINDKW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 26-Aug 30</td>
<td>PARINDKW</td>
<td>PARINDJJ</td>
<td>PARINDMS</td>
<td>PARINDML</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 2-Sept 6</td>
<td>PARINDML</td>
<td>PARINDKW</td>
<td>PARINDJJ</td>
<td>PARINDMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 9-Sept 13</td>
<td>PARINDMS</td>
<td>PARINDML</td>
<td>PARINDKW</td>
<td>PARINDJJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 16-Sept 20</td>
<td>PARINDJJ</td>
<td>PARINDMS</td>
<td>PARINDML</td>
<td>PARINDKW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 23-Sept 27</td>
<td>PARINDKW</td>
<td>PARINDJJ</td>
<td>PARINDMS</td>
<td>PARINDML</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 30-Oct 4</td>
<td>PARINDML</td>
<td>PARINDKW</td>
<td>PARINDJJ</td>
<td>PARINDMS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First year teacher 30-minute duty:
First year teachers will choose one teacher each week from his or her assigned group to observe. Teachers will watch for instructional strategies, classroom management techniques, and classroom and lesson organization and structure. Be sure to notice how each teacher's unique classroom atmosphere and lesson structure supports learning at the highest level and positive management of student behavior. Good classroom management is in the details, look for classroom procedures that run seamlessly with little to no class disruption. Consider take-aways that you can implement in your own classroom.

Teachers will turn in a quarterly log. This will be provided through Google Docs. Submit this form on the following dates: September 20th, November 15th, February 14th, and April 24th.