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# Investigating the Influence of Mentors With National Board Certification on Mentees' Perceptions of Their Own Teaching Practice and Attitudes of Remaining a Teacher

Joshua Michael McGoun

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INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE OF MENTORS WITH NATIONAL BOARD  
CERTIFICATION ON MENTEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR OWN TEACHING  
PRACTICE AND ATTITUDES OF REMAINING A TEACHER

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this degree to all of the educators and friends that helped mold me into the professional I am today. Without you, I would not have accomplished what I have over the years. To the educators and staff at Marzolf Elementary, Shaler Area Middle School, Shaler Area Intermediate school, Shaler Area High School, the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Sto-Rox Middle School, the ACLD Tillotson School, the Howard County Public School System, the Howard County Education Association, Towson University, and the University of South Carolina, your contributions have helped me become the professional I am. This dissertation is dedicated to you for being impactful educational professionals that I am forever grateful to have worked with. I hope you find your voice in my work. A big thanks goes to my big guy, Randy, for always being by my side. I also dedicate this work to my loving Grandmothers, Barbara and Helen. The kindness, love, and toughness you shared with me are significant traits of my professional practice. Your care resonates not within me but within the many students I have taught and will teach in the years to come. Finally, to my parents, Myron and Jackie, for being the most authentic, loving parents any son could ask for. I love you so much.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In Maryland, 47% of new teachers do not see a third year of teaching. Maryland also imports more teachers from neighboring states than it produces on its own (Kirwan & Hise, 2020). In order to improve new teachers' skills and hopefully retain them, The Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence has proposed creating the position of "Master Teacher" to mentor new teachers. The "Master Teachers" need to earn National Board Certification (NBC) to be considered for the position. This research study examined mentees' reflections and analyzed the presence of themes relating to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' Five Core Propositions. It was found that mentees whose mentor held NBC were no more likely to describe their own professional practice aligned with the NBC's Five Core Propositions than a mentee whose mentor did not have the certification. However, mentees who had a mentor with NBC were more agreeable that they could see themselves teaching three or more years.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The role of a teacher in American education is one of ever-increasing responsibilities. Teachers are no longer mere broadcasters of information where they are engaged in a process of unearthing inert knowledge from dusty textbooks. The role and job functions of teachers continue to expand (Han, 2017). Teachers are expected to complete so many tasks during the workday that most teachers feel they cannot complete their duties during the contracted day, feel their workload is unacceptable, and struggle to maintain a work-life balance (Walker, Worth, & Van den Brande, 2019). Teachers report feeling overworked and underappreciated (Higton et al., 2017). The inability to get work done during the workday contributes to teacher stress and exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). The allure of the position and respectability that came with the title of teacher is a waning facet for attracting new teachers. A decades-long deprofessionalization of teachers from politicians and public commentary have reduced the pride and confidence that being a teacher once exuded (Goldstein, 2015). Even when effective teachers are recruited to join the field, it is difficult to keep them from leaving (Darling-Hammond, 2011).

Student teaching programs provide new educators with a taste of the commitment experienced teachers exude in a day-to-day manner. Teacher preparation programs typically assess 15-20 competencies in student teaching that may not adequately address

or assess dispositions and skills that will ensure success as a teacher (Soslau & Rath, 2017). It can be difficult to observe an aspiring teacher for five months and accurately predict their duration of commitment to the profession (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2009). Upon successful completion of student teaching, those aspiring teachers are to be on their own, front and center in the classroom full-time. They will have full responsibility of the entire teacher role without someone to intimately monitor and correct their behaviors. New teachers with less than six years of experience report working two more hours per day than teachers with 11 years of experience or more (Higton et al., 2017). Transitioning from student teacher to a full-time teacher is difficult for many new teachers to handle even with the best career aspirations. According to a study by Sinclair (2008), the most idealistic teachers with altruistic motivations are the most likely to leave the teaching profession because they experience little if any guidance with regard to their goals and work evaluation.

Effective mentoring programs help extend a safety net and foster further professional development for new teachers (Huling, Resta, & Yeargain, 2012). Having a mentor increases the likelihood of a first-year teacher remaining in the field (Gray & Taie, 2015). With a mentor, new teachers have access to someone who can provide resources, answer questions, and foster positive attitudes that ultimately assist with success in the classroom. Most school districts and individual schools offer mentoring programs for new teachers (Cook, 2012). However, it is not always the case that an organized program with goals, a schedule, and a framework exists. Some seasoned teachers are simply asked to look after one or more new teachers on a loose basis where they simply mentor on a check-in basis. This approach lacks structure and may allow

some teachers to go unsupported (Bullough, 2012). Effective mentoring programs feature goal setting, reflection, resource-sharing, and focus on future career development (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). It is not enough to simply look after new teachers. They need structure that supports their growth yet does not overburden their already hefty workload (Cook, 2012). Establishing and nurturing effective mentoring programs for new teachers ensures that they are not left to fend for themselves in a high-stress position. In having teachers supported with effective mentoring programs in the classroom, student learning outcomes will improve (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem of Practice**

The United States is experiencing a challenge of filling classrooms with qualified teachers. This problem was first presented to the nation in a series of reports released in the 1980s (Ingersoll, 2001). Looking to stem the exodus of new teachers, retaining effective teachers continues to be a focus of school administrators but several difficulties persist. In the first five years of teaching, 30% of teachers leave the profession. For comparison, 14% of pharmacists, 16% of engineers, and 19% of lawyers and nurses leave within the first five years (García & Weiss, 2019a). The number of new teachers leaving the field is accelerating (Gray & Taie, 2015). The teacher retention and recruitment problem disproportionately impact schools with high Black and Hispanic populations. These schools are much more likely to experience new teacher turnover and have more teachers educating without completing their teacher education programs (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). In the setting where this study is executed, the Howard County Public School System has shared in a risk report that staff shortages is a high-risk area and that effective mentors are needed to help solve the problem (Howard County

Public School System, 2020). The epidemic of teachers fleeing the profession is a significant problem that continues to exist despite school districts' best efforts to remedy the problem.

The No Child Left Behind act of 2001 stipulates that all schools must employ highly qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010). These teachers are described as highly qualified have graduated from an accredited college, taught for at least two years, and possess an experienced academic background (Krasnoff, 2014). Teacher retention research by Ingersoll (2001) shares, "Teacher turnover is a significant phenomenon, and a dominant factor behind the demand for new teachers and the difficulties schools encounter adequately staffing classrooms with qualified teachers" (p.501). The struggle to retain and recruit highly qualified teachers is even greater in schools that are urban and socioeconomically disadvantaged (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Many states are experiencing teacher retention and recruitment issues. In Arizona, the 2018 school year began with approximately 2,000 teaching positions vacant where 3,400 teaching positions were filled by individuals not holding a standard teaching certificate (Webber et al., 2018). Maryland filled 68% of its vacant teaching positions in 2015 from outside of the state and this trend is increasing (Janulis, 2017). By new teachers' third year of teaching, 47% of Maryland teachers do not return to the classroom (Kirwan & Hise, 2020). Maryland also imports more new teachers than it produces from neighboring states. Most of Maryland's recruits come from Pennsylvania (*Baltimore Sun* Staff, 2019).

Contributing to the teacher shortage is a lack of students choosing to pursue and graduating with bachelor's degrees in education. In the time between 2006 and 2018, the number of students graduating with a bachelor's degree in education in the United States

declined by 23% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Maryland is also experiencing an enrollment decrease in teacher education programs (Janulis, 2017). Across the United States, school districts continue to struggle to retain and recruit highly qualified teachers. To make up for this, the number of states requiring content-specific bachelor's degrees to obtain teacher certification decreased (García & Weiss, 2019b).

Several issues contribute to the teacher retention phenomenon. The most significant variables cited for a teacher leaving the profession are a lack of professional support and teacher motivation (Ingersoll, 2001). Motivation to continue within the profession is a significant concern. Müller, Alliata, and Benninghoff, (2009) share that teachers often

regret having too little autonomy and flexibility with regard to pedagogical choices and feel there is a lack of hierarchical support for specific measures—leading to major frustration and teacher losses. Finally, strong identification with the teaching profession fades over time. It seems that the initial enthusiasm for teaching cannot, unfortunately, be maintained over the years. More experienced teachers regret, on a systematic basis, that the professional image of teaching has deteriorated over the course of their career and that they do not identify themselves with the current profession any more. (p.591-592)

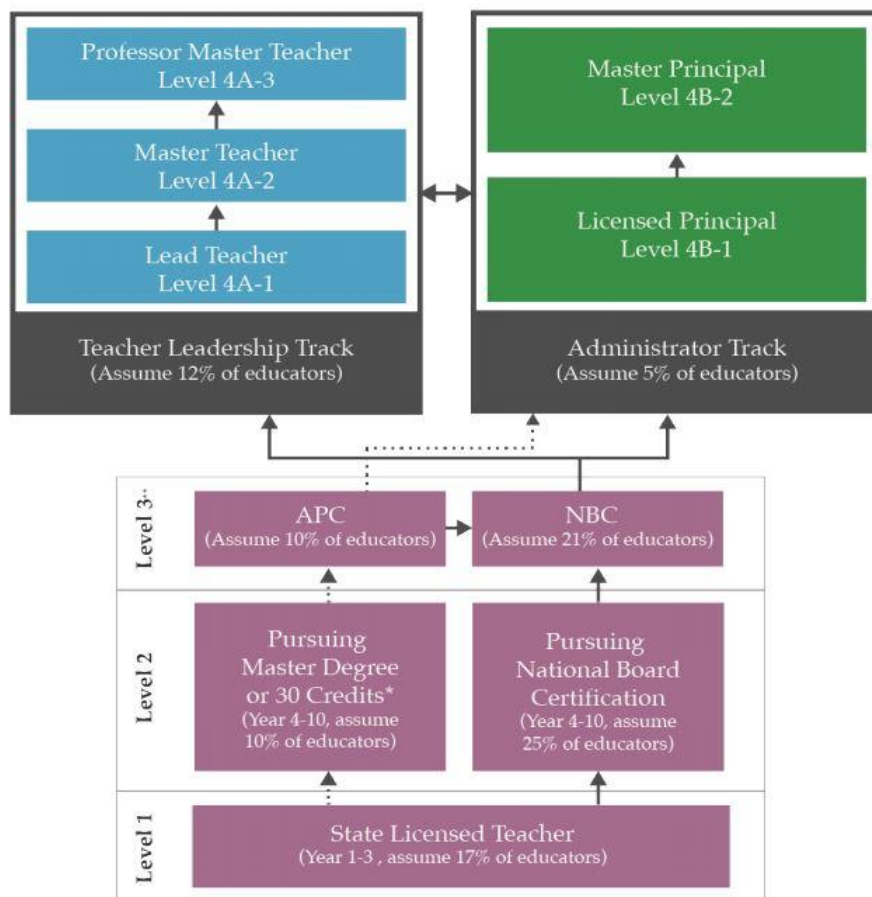
The research from Müller, Alliata, and Benninghoff demonstrates that motivation and enthusiasm are factors related to teacher retention. It is also shown that the amount of academic autonomy and support a teacher is permitted plays a role in how long a teacher stays in the profession. These factors are related to the initial and following years for a beginning teacher.

Financial variables illustrate the perils of failing to retain teachers. Costs to replace a teacher in an urban setting can reach \$20,000 (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Retaining teachers with mentoring programs can help alleviate already financially distressed school districts. This allows an experienced staff to focus on school reform and student achievement efforts (Huling, Resta, & Yeargain, 2012). Teachers also cite a lack of appropriate compensation for their work. A nationwide estimate of teacher pay generates annual earnings of \$58,950. Annual earnings are 20% lower than other professionals with a college degree. These earnings vary by location and do not often take cost of living adjustments into consideration (Reilly & Edwards, 2018). Maryland teachers' pay is 25% under professions in the region where a similar degree and education are required for employment (Kirwan & Hise, 2020). Starting pay also influences retention. First-year teachers earning above \$40,000 are more likely to remain in the profession (Gray & Taie, 2015).

The Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence was established in 2016 to improve the quality of public education throughout the state (Wood, 2020). Of the many problems highlighted by the commission, the commission noted teacher retention as a critical problem impacting state schools (Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, 2019). The Commission recommended a mechanism for retaining teachers that creates new positions. First, teachers would be able to become "Master Teachers" by earning National Board Certification in a content area in which they currently teach. This position allows for career advancement without becoming an administrator. The Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence describes the "Master Teachers" as:

Mentors of practicum programs will be highly competent teachers (*e.g.*, Master Teachers on the career ladder) selected by the district to instill in the next generation of teachers the kinds of skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge they want in the people they hope to attract to teaching in their district.” (p.54)

Second, the “Master Teachers” will act as mentors to help improve the retention and instruction of new teachers.



*Figure 1.1* Maryland Career Ladder for Educators. Reprinted from *Interim Report* by Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, 2019.

The Commission shares, “As the Commission’s recommendations are implemented and more teachers choose to remain in the profession longer, there will be less teacher turnover” (p.140). Salmon and Spross (2019) share, “Only those individuals who achieve

the level of a lead teacher or higher are identified as having the skills and knowledge to mentor other teachers” (p.37). In summary, teacher retention will be improved by allowing existing teachers to pursue the new Master Teacher positions and those Master Teachers will focus on mentoring new teachers with the hope of retaining them through mentorship.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

Two research questions have been developed to investigate an intervention with the goal of providing better mentors for new teachers and teaching them the skills that will allow them to remain in the profession. First: Do mentees who had a mentor with National Board Certification describe their own teaching habits more aligned with the five core propositions of National Board Certification compared to a mentee whose mentor did not have the certification?

The Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence also shares that Master Teachers will be more equipped to mentor new (untenured) teachers and that ability will be able to keep more teachers from leaving the profession. The assumption made by the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence demonstrates that new teachers will be more prepared to handle the realities of being a new teacher and will have sound pedagogical skills to navigate those early years. The second research question for this study asks: Do mentees of mentors with National Board Certification express more confidence in remaining in the profession beyond two years compared to a mentee who did not have a mentor with National Board Certification? Both research questions will be evaluated qualitatively.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2021) outlines the five core propositions:

- 1) Teachers are committed to their students and their learning.
- 2) Teachers know the subjects that they teach and how to teach them.
- 3) Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
- 4) Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience
- 5) Teachers are members of learning communities. (par. 3)

The Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence has identified National Board Certification as the only criteria for becoming a Master Teacher. Only Master Teachers can be leaders of new teachers under this new initiative (Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, 2019). This question will be evaluated qualitatively.

#### **1.4 Purpose of this Study**

Maryland is introducing the professional positions of Master Teacher and Professor Master Teacher as mentors and professional development creators for teachers with varying levels of experience. These positions are designed to place highly qualified teachers in leadership roles with the intention of modeling and building teachers' skills rather than a typical promotion into an administrative role (Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, 2019). The purpose of this study is to investigate the efficacy of this initiative as it related to teachers' perceptions of their skills and likelihood of remaining a teacher. These skills are aligned with the five core propositions of National Board Certification and its potential ability to help new teachers remain in the profession.

## **1.5 Researcher Positionality**

Herr & Anderson (2015) share that “action research dissertations are today often done by organizational or community insiders” (p. 38). I have played many roles when considering teacher evaluation, development, and retention. As a union representative for my school, I have provided assistance and unofficially mentored teachers of all experiences. This includes mentoring teachers through administrative pressures, career decisions, lesson planning, and job placement. Being a support for new and struggling teachers is a role I greatly enjoy. Outside of my school, I serve on various countywide panels and committees related to teaching and coaching policies. As a panel member on these committees, I work with central office administrators, community members, students, and union leaders to evaluate and create policy. My school district, as the local education authority, retains some autonomy for designing teacher development and mentoring programs.

Action researchers are often expected to continue their professional workload while conducting their research. (Herr & Anderson, 2015). For this study, my sole role is that of an independent researcher investigating a phenomenon in my local setting. While I have experience participating in information gathering sessions and union meetings regarding Maryland’s Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, I will remain independent from further activities regarding the Commission’s work and policy implementation and I will have no administrative influence over participants in relation to my school and union work. From this, Herr and Anderson would consider my position to be an insider engaged in an applied action research study.

## 1.6 Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study will utilize elements from James Gee's linguistic discourse theory, Lev Vygotsky's theory of proximal development, and Jerome Bruner's theory of scaffolding. The use of Gee's discourse theory will focus on what he refers to as the "identity kit" of teachers while Vygotsky's theory of proximal development will examine how knowledge and skills are acquired and learned. James Gee's linguistic Discourse theory, with a capital *D* refers to social practices and behaviors that are distinct. These Discourses, while identifiable and categorical, are not absolute and may overlap. Elements of identity can be observed through these Discourses (Gee, 2015b). In this framework, Discourse with a capital *D* is a macro product of many interrelated "discourses," with a lowercase *d* (Gee, 2014a).

For Discourse to be used as an identity construct, more than language needs to be considered. Identity is not formed on language alone. "Big D" Discourse addresses the "identity kit" of a person (Gee, 1989, p.7). Discourse is how one acts, speaks, and thinks that identifies one as a member of a group. One must not only speak in like-minded discourse but also act properly in the Discourse (Gee, 2015a). On the golf course, it is not enough to appropriately use golf terminology to be viewed in a favorable manner. To be accepted by others within this Discourse, the player must also abide by proper etiquette and social graces. Likewise, for an aspiring teacher to belong as a professional, it is not enough to simply teach in the classroom.

Teachers are expected to develop professionally and contribute to professional and local communities in order to "belong." For example, the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards' Core Proposition Five shares that teachers belong and

participate in professional learning communities (2021). The development of accepted behavior within a Discourse is a constructivist process that is the result of acquiring information, not learning. Acceptable behavioral practices are acquired through authentic experiences within the Discourse (Gee, 1989). Gee shares that when a newcomer is able to enact their “identity kit,” that person becomes literate within that Discourse and becomes a member. One can read and study as much as they can to fit into a Discourse but natural exposure and the acquisition of identity within the Discourse are what will ultimately help a person fit. In developing new teachers, the current study looks at the Discourses they demonstrate and whether the mentor helped in the construction of an acceptable “identity kit” that is outlined by the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence (2019). In constructing this “identity kit,” the Commission assumes teachers will be better equipped with skills that will help them become effective teachers and remain in the teaching profession.

Lev Vygotsky’s social development theory (SDT) is a constructivist theory in which learning is derived from social interactions (McLeod, 2014). This model will be used to frame the mentoring model to be researched. Teacher mentoring is a social learning process between the mentor, mentee, and professional development. Teachers observe teaching methods of experienced teachers and reproduce those observations in professional practice (Watson, 2013). Gee (2015b) shares, “it is clear that not only is understanding a public and social affair, but it is also often the product of interactional work people do with each other and with the world” (p.302).

Within Vygotsky’s SDT lies the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) who contributes to the learning of another by possessing skills or knowledge that are passed in

a zone of proximal development (McLeod, 2014). While mostly discussed in literature in the realm of child development, key concepts from Vygotsky's SDT can be used to develop teachers' skills. The MKO is able to provide specific, field-related feedback for the educator's professional growth. For this study, the MKO is designated as the Master Teacher.

### ***Zone of proximal development***

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development exists in cognitive and affective spaces. Affectively, the zone of proximal development is found between frustration and boredom. Cognitively, the material is not too difficult or easy (Murray & Arroyo, 2002). The zone of proximal development is utilized when the learner is given assistance in learning something new. For teachers, their zone of proximal development is shaped by their mentors, peers, technology, student achievement data, and contextual constraints (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010). It is widely known that teachers benefit from the encouragement and support of their colleagues (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011). Fani and Ghaemi (2011) share, "Teachers can improve their ZPTD through diary writing, self-scaffolding, collaborating with colleagues, conducting action research, analysis of teaching practice, and having discussions with learners (p.1550). Learning in the zone of proximal development is a social action. Shabani et al., (2010) add, "only when the 'social' aspects of teacher learning are taken on board can one claim about the applicability of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to teacher professional development" (p.245). In acting upon the zone of proximal development, teachers can learn and develop skills from others that they may employ in their professional environments.

### ***More knowledgeable other***

The more knowledgeable other serves as an agent for facilitating growth within the zone of proximal development. McLeod (2014) adds the more knowledgeable other is “someone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task, process, or concept” (par. 15). This agent has experience within the topic area and an understanding of how to grow the learner into an expected practice. Given the social nature of the zone of proximal development, learning happens in the presence of others (Abtahi, Graven, & Lerman, 2017). Roth and Radford (2010) share, “the most important aspect of the zone of proximal development is the emergence of a new form of collective consciousness, something that cannot be achieved if we act in solitary fashion” (p.14). The value derived from the zone of proximal development illustrates the importance of growth outside of solitary behavior. Jerome Bruner’s theory of scaffolding shares that the more knowledgeable other acts within the zone of proximal development to build the learner’s skills (Smagorinsky, 2018). The theories from Gee, Vygotsky, and Bruner demonstrate an abstract constructivist web of learning from others that can be applied to mentoring teachers.

### **1.7 Brief Overview of Methodology**

An action research design has been adopted to explore the role National Board Certification may have on mentees who are mentored by certificate holders and how their experience may shape their attitudes of remaining in the profession. Action research is best done with stakeholders involved in the research (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Participants in this study will be new teachers who are in their first or second year of teaching. Each of these new teachers are or have been mentored. Some of their mentors

hold National Board Certification and other mentors do not. While subjects are limited to those conveniently available in my professional circles, this study seeks to provide information for local and public domains.

Action research follows a cycle. Kemmis, (1982) as cited in Herr & Anderson 2015, describes as a “spiral of action cycles” where the researcher seeks

1. to develop a plan of action to improve what is already happening;
2. to act to implement the plan;
3. to observe the effects of action in context in which it occurs; and
4. to reflect on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent action and on, through a succession of cycles (p.5).

Research will be conducted in collaboration with teachers across the state of Maryland. This convenience sample relative to the researcher allows for an effective collection of data based on time, location, and availability of respondents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). The targeted participants in this study are untenured teachers with zero to two years of classroom experience who have been assigned a mentor by a school district, principal, or other administrative position. A subgroup of this population is those who are mentored by a teacher holding National Board Certification. These teachers will complete an online form that contains Likert-style questions and open-ended short response questions. Their responses will be coded blindly by the researcher. Responses from the interviews will be evaluated and coded for themes to be placed into categories. Data from the surveys will be processed to understand significance.

A qualitative approach has been adopted for this study. Structured surveys will be used to gather qualitative data. Surveys are needed when behaviors cannot be explicitly

observed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This study will use one structured form for all participants. Surveys in social sciences are used to study a population (Jansen, 2010). The use of surveys in qualitative research allows for an effective collection of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). Data from surveys will be compared to the five standards of National Board Certification to understand if there is a difference in professional behaviors between mentees who had a mentor with National Board Certification and those who did not. The data will also be used to explore qualitative themes of remaining in the profession beyond two years.

### **1.8 Significance of Study**

Action research is different from “traditional” research. Efron and Ravid (2019) share, “Action research is usually defined as an inquiry conducted by educators in their own settings in order to advance their practice and improve their students learning” (p.2). This study is designed to investigate policy that may shape teacher development. This action research study will help generate understandings related to teacher development, mentoring, and possibly inform best practices for the selection of teacher leaders. While this study is aimed at understanding a teacher retention and development mechanism in Maryland, themes discussed in this study could be used universally.

There have been several studies that analyze the influences of the certification on classroom practices (Houston & Kalinna, 2019; Rouse, 2018; Horoi & Bhai, 2008). However, very little research exists that discusses the influences of National Board Certification on mentoring capabilities. This may be because the primary function of the certification is to improve content teacher effectiveness (Cavalluzzo, 2004). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards shares that while those with the certification

may become professional leaders, it does not mention that the certification improves mentoring abilities (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2021).

Understanding the influences of the certification is important. Many states and school districts craft policies, legislation, and budgetary items around teachers obtaining National Board Certification (Cavalluzzo, 2004).

### **1.9 Definition of Terms**

Acquisition – The adoption of ways of speaking, acting, and thinking in order to belong to a Discourse (Gee, 2011a).

Action Research – Research conducted by a practitioner in an environment or profession to understand a problem or phenomenon (Efron & Ravid, 2019).

Discourse – The result of many discourses that contribute to identity, belonging, beliefs, and interactions (Gee, 2014a).

Learning – Gaining knowledge by being aware of what is being taught (Gee, 2011a).

Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence – A investigatory body established to review funding formulas and recommend changes to enable Maryland to produce a world-class public education system (Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, 2019).

Master Teacher – A highly competent teacher who has earned National Board Certification. This teacher will be a leader and mentor to teachers (Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, 2019).

Mentor- A person with experience used for developing new learners' knowledge and skills (Huling, Resta, & Yeargain, 2012).

More Knowledgeable Other – A person able to transfer knowledge and skills within Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (Abtahi, Graven, & Lerman, 2017).

Scaffolding – Jerome Bruner's concept of strategically organizing learning objectives to achieve a larger learning outcome (Smagorinsky, 2018).

Zone of Proximal Development – The cognitive space between boredom and frustration where learning can occur (Murray & Arroyo, 2002).

### **1.10 Organization of this Dissertation**

This dissertation follows a traditional five-chapter format. The first chapter introduces the problem of practice in context, research questions, and the guiding theoretical framework for the study. Chapter two reviews relevant literature related to the current study that is aligned with the theoretical framework. The third chapter outlines this study's research methodology. Data tools and a description of the processing of data are described within the third chapter. Chapter four will describe and illustrate the results of the study. The fifth chapter will discuss findings and compare them to existing research. This chapter will also discuss recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This study seeks to understand the potential influence of a proposed intervention designed to improve teacher retention rates. Teacher attrition rates continue to climb (Gray & Taie, 2015). This problem is compounded by fewer students selecting education as a major in college and graduating with degrees in education (Janulis, 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Teachers also report losing interest and enthusiasm as the value of the profession wanes as a reason to leave the field (Müller, Alliata, and Benninghoff, 2009). Maryland has proposed creating the professional position of “Master Teachers” as teacher leaders to mentor new teachers. These “Master Teachers” must hold a National Board Certification in an area in which they currently teach to be considered for the position schools (Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, 2019). This study will seek to understand the effects, if any, a mentor having National Board Certification may have on a mentee given the elevated purview the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence has regarding the certification compared to a mentee whose mentor did not have the certification.

### **2.2 Literature Review Methodology**

Machi and McEvoy (2016) write, “A literature review is a written document that presents a logically argued case founded on a comprehensive understanding of the current

state of knowledge about at topic of study” (p.5). Several books, journals, online databases, and websites were used to create a comprehensive review of related research. The online research databases of ERIC, EBSCO, Google Scholar, and JSTOR are the primary sources of utilized information for this literature review.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

Establishing a theoretical framework for a research study frames the logic from which it shall be considered. Personal assumptions and experiences from the researcher influence the choice of a theoretical framework for research (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). A theoretical framework can be viewed as a lens that places information in a certain focus. In action research studies, a framework shapes the analysis, collection, and utilization of information relating to a topic (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Grant and Osanloo share, “one of the many values of having a clearly identified theoretical framework for a dissertation study is the ability to use this material to support and build the methodological plan” (p.21). The theoretical framework aligns all components of a research study.

Lev Vygotsky’s social development theory (SDT) focuses on a constructivist theory where learning is derived from social interactions. This model will be used to frame the mentoring model to be researched. Teacher mentoring is a social learning process between the mentor, mentee, and professional development. Teachers observe teaching methods of experienced teachers and reproduce those observations in professional practice (Watson, 2013). Gee (2015a) shares, “it is clear that not only is understanding a public and social affair, but it is also often the product of interactional work people do with each other and with the world” (p.302). Gee goes on to describe that we create “identity kits” that are acquired, not learned over time (2001a, 2001b, 2015a,

2015b). Gee shares that discourses cannot be learned from teaching. Discourses are acquired through socialization such as speaking, acting, and thinking.

Within Vygotsky's SDT lies the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) who contributes to the learning of another by possessing skills or knowledge that are passed in a zone of proximal development (McLeod, 2014). While mostly discussed in literature in the realm of child development, key concepts from Vygotsky's SDT can be used to develop teachers' skills. The MKO is able to provide specific, field-related feedback for the educator's professional growth. For this study, the MKO is designated as the Master Teacher. Even with limited resources and sometimes difficult working conditions, teacher mentors have transferrable skills that new teachers can benefit from (Sparks et al., 2017). Through the lens of Gee's discourse theory, it is expected that new teachers acquire these behaviors and skills through social interaction (Gee 2015a, 2015b).

### ***Zone of Proximal Development***

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development exists in cognitive and affective spaces. Affectively, the zone of proximal development is found between frustration and boredom. Cognitively, the material is not too difficult or easy (Murray & Arroyo, 2002). The zone of proximal development is utilized when the learner is given assistance in learning something new. While research has extensively analyzed the zone of proximal development for pedagogical purposes, the concept can be expanded to help understand best practices for mentoring new teachers (Shabani, 2016).

For teachers, their zone of proximal development is shaped by their mentors, peers, technology, student achievement data, and contextual constraints (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010). It is widely known that teachers benefit from the encouragement and

support of their colleagues (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011). Fani and Ghaemi share, “teachers can improve their ZPTD through diary writing, self-scaffolding, collaborating with colleagues, conducting action research, analysis of teaching practice, and having discussions with learners (2011, p.1550). Learning in the zone of proximal development is a social action. Shabani et al., (2010) add, “only when the 'social' aspects of teacher learning are taken on board can one claim about the applicability of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory to teacher professional development” (p.245). In acting upon the zone of proximal development, teachers can learn and develop skills from others that they may employ in their professional environments.

### ***More Knowledgeable Other***

The more knowledgeable other serves as an agent for facilitating growth within the zone of proximal development. McLeod (2014) adds the more knowledgeable other is, “someone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task, process, or concept.” This agent has experience within the topic area and an understanding of how to grow the learner into an expected practice. Given the social nature of the zone of proximal development, learning happens in the presence of others (Abtahi, Graven, & Lerman, 2017). Roth and Radford (2010) share, “the most important aspect of the zone of proximal development is the emergence of a new form of collective consciousness, something that cannot be achieved if we act in solitary fashion” (p.14). The value derived from the zone of proximal development illustrates the importance of growth outside of solitary behavior.

Jerome Bruner expanded upon Vygotsky’s concept of the zone of proximal development and the more knowledgeable other (Smagorinsky, 2018). Scaffolding is

used to methodologically develop a trait or skill between the learner and a student within the zone of proximal development (Renshaw, 2013). Renshaw adds, “learning with and from others can be as much about building a relationship as it is about mastering a specific skill” (p.59). Mentoring programs used to develop personal skills are prime examples of utilizing scaffolding and the zone of proximal development (Dziczkowski, 2013).

## **2.4 Historical Perspectives**

The supply and demand of qualified teachers to fill professional vacancies is a cyclical pattern (Müller, Alliata, & Benninghoff, 2009). While teacher turnover follows a cycle, the United States is experiencing a current nationwide shortage of qualified teachers. Many factors have contributed at national and local education authority levels to create this shortage. Reilly and Edwards (2018) mention:

To many teachers, these trends are a result of a decades-long and bipartisan war on public education, born of frustration with teachers’ unions, a desire to standardize curricula and a professed commitment to fiscal austerity. This has led to a widespread expansion of charter schools, which are publicly funded but privately operated, and actions such as a move in the Wisconsin legislature in 2011 to strip teachers’ pensions and roll back collective bargaining rights. This year, Colorado lawmakers voted to raise teachers’ retirement age and cut benefits. (p.28)

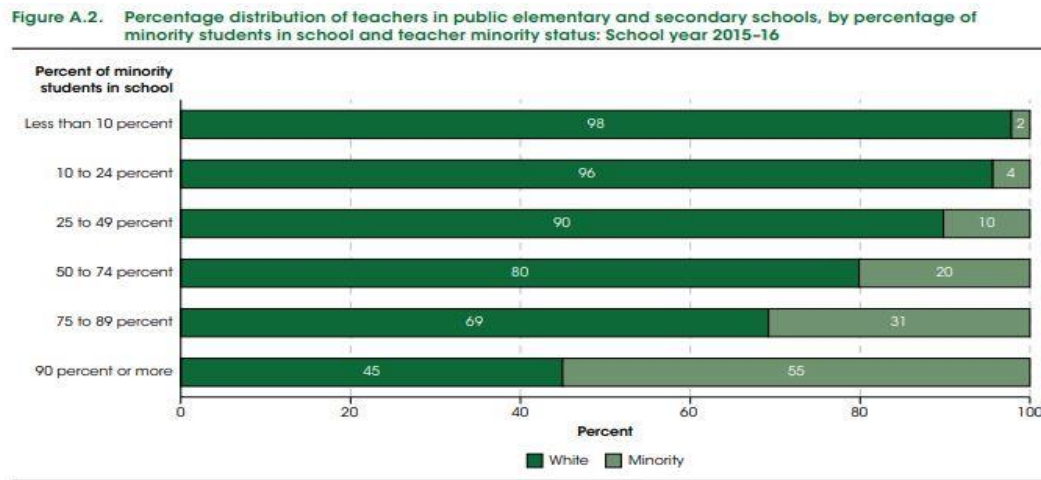
The teacher shortage in the United States has become so dire that specific curricular disciplines are looking at targeting immigrant populations to populate hard to fill disciplines (Gross, 2009).

Hoping to sway public opinion and political clout towards teachers in a positive manner, nationwide public demonstrations by teachers have been held. Ingersoll (2001) shares “fully understanding turnover requires examining the character and conditions of the organizations within which employees work” (p.506). Teachers have made efforts to make the struggles of the teaching profession known publicly. These demonstrations have been held to illuminate working conditions, low pay, cuts benefits, and other topics (Webber et al., 2018). Even in deeply conservative communities and states, teachers have swayed public opinion to support tax increases for an increase education funding (Reilly & Edwards, 2018). These efforts occur in a landscape where unions across the country are losing power and membership while teacher unions remain funded and professionally staffed (Webber et al., 2018). While the tide of public support for education funding may be changing, retaining qualified teachers remains a difficult task.

## **2.5 Equity and Teacher Race Considerations**

Concepts related to teacher retention are more profound when considering the demographics of teachers in schools where the teaching profession has been dominated by White teachers. The American K-12 student population is more racially diverse than ever (de Brey et al., 2019). As the American educational landscape stands now, White students are more likely to recognize financial and academic successes than their minority peers (Howard, 2014). The American teaching force is primarily White, even in schools where the population is not (de Brey et al., 2019). The predominantly White teaching force creates a cultural mismatch between the educational system and the student in most urban schools. Cultural mismatching occurs when the learning environment does not match that of the home environment of the student (Howard,

2014). Cultural mismatching continues to occur because the teaching profession does not racially represent the makeup of the population.



*Figure 2.1* From “Racial Makeup of American School Teachers,” by de Brey et al., 2019.

Not only are teachers of color underrepresented, but also Black teachers leave the profession 24% faster than White teachers (Kohli, 2018). The problem is compounded when school characteristics are considered. Teachers from socioeconomically disadvantaged schools are also more likely to transfer or leave school locations (Darling-Hammond & Luczak, 2005).

Teaching in an urban environment presents many challenges for teachers. In a given week, almost half (47.6%) of teachers in an urban school reported experiencing aggressive behavior from a student (Camacho & Parham 2019). While the current study has 22 participants across Maryland, six of them teach in Baltimore City. New teachers of color also report feeling unsupported in addressing sociocultural issues and general feelings of alienation (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008). It is crucial that teachers of color are retained despite these challenges. Students perform at higher levels of achievement when they are educated by a teacher of the same race (Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015).

Teachers are also coaches for extra-curricular sports and activities. Black students who participate in extra-curricular physical activity are more likely to have higher GPAs (Foerster-Puglisi, 2018). With considerations of social justice, the achievement gap may possibly be reduced with the retention of more teachers of color. The need to retain teachers of color is even more critical considering they leave the profession at a higher rate than their White colleagues (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010). The current study has five non-White participants.

The importance of considering teacher race and student achievement extends deeply into the classroom environment. Black teachers have been found to have higher expectations of their students' potential success in college than their White colleagues (Beady & Hansell, 1981). The relationships between race and teacher perceptions of student achievement are even greater in lower socioeconomic schools and schools in the south (Dee, 2005). These findings elevate the need for more teachers of color to lead classrooms of same-race students. The challenges are not only in attracting teachers of color to the profession but keeping them in it. This has been the case for at least the last three decades. King (1993) adds:

As a profession, there is a need to attract more academically able candidates from all backgrounds. Further research on the early career experiences of teachers of all backgrounds, races, and ethnicities is needed. Subsequently, the research on beginning teaching can be strengthened, and an expanded research base on the experiences of teachers of color could prove to be invaluable to many areas of the teaching profession, including recruitment and retention concerns; curricular

initiatives-such as, Afrocentric curricula and multicultural education-to successfully educate all children; and urban education. (p.141)

Research from Beady and Hansell (1981), King (1993), Dee (2005) and Egalite et al. (2015) illustrate a historical and continuing need to recruit and retain qualified minority teachers. Their collective research emphasizes the implications and importance of the race of the teacher and student achievement.

## **2.6 Related Research**

### ***National Board Certified Teachers as Mentors***

In a report prepared for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, Zhu, Gnedko-Berry, Borman, and Manzeske (2019) analyzed the influence of Nationally Board Certified teachers as mentors to novice teachers against teachers mentored with someone not possessing the certification. Researchers analyzed teachers' professional practices related to emotional support, classroom organization, instructional support, and student achievement. These domains were measured by observing the instructional practices of K-12 teachers and measuring student achievement scores in grades four through eight.

From the three domains of emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support, there was no statistically significant difference found between the two groups. The authors note the effect sizes for emotional support and classroom organization did suggest some meaningful differences between those mentored from a mentor with and without the certification. With regard to student achievement in math and language arts, the authors did find a statistically significant difference and meaningful effect size between teachers mentored with a mentor possessing the

certificate and teachers mentored without the certificate. However, the authors share these results are hampered by low statistical power and a small sample size. Importantly, the authors noted that there is a lack of research regarding Nationally Board Certified teachers as instructional leaders as it relates to student and teacher outcomes.

Belson and Husted (2015) analyzed the effects that Nationally Board Certified teachers may have on reading and math scores using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data from 2009 and 2011. This study used a nationwide test rather than a state-level test. They also studied the indirect effects National Board Certified teachers may have on student achievement as their roles as mentors and leaders in the school setting.

Belson and Husted (2015) found a positive relationship between student achievement scores in reading and math with a teacher possessing the certification. They note this as a direct influence of the National Board Certification. Indirectly, the authors note a “spillover” effect of a teacher possessing the certificate. Researchers asked teachers about their interactions with their colleagues. These questions asked about their perceptions of mentoring/peer observations and their collaboration/networking with professional peers. This research question is aimed at investigating the attitudes regarding National Board for Professional Teaching Practices Core Proposition Five: Teachers are members of learning communities. Participants’ answers were correlated with their National Board Certification status. The authors share that the correlations were positive and significant at the 1% level. This means a teacher with the certificate was more willing to mentor or lead development activities at the school. A significant limitation of this

study is that the “spillover” effect is indirect and difficult to directly measure its impact on student learning outcomes and the teachers’ colleagues’ instructional practices.

These studies illustrate a vague and limited connection between National Board Certification and teachers’ professional practice. From indirect relationships, data presenting no statistical significance, and limited existing research, it is difficult to understand the effects of National Board Certification on teachers’ professional practices. Student test scores in reading and math were found to have a positive relationship when taught by a teacher holding the certificate. However, these studies were limited to data only representing two content areas. Subjects including history, physical education, health, music, art, computer science, and others are not typically used when analyzing the effects of National Board Certification because data may not exist. Many states do not collect statewide data on these subjects. Thus, the scope of the role National Board Certification may play is limited regarding student learning outcomes.

Washburn, Washburn-Moses, and Davis (2012) analyzed the role National Board Certified special education teachers may have on their mentees. While their sample of 66 National Board Certified Teachers was not compared to a group without the certification, the study sought to understand the level of involvement that certified teachers have on “junior colleagues.” The researchers utilized Maddex’s 1994 *Mentors’ Survey* to measure the actions and behaviors of the mentors. The study found that 90% National Board Certified special education teachers engage and formal and informal mentoring practices. Researchers shared that while participants identified various informal and formal mentoring practices, there was significant overlap between the two. For example, both types of mentoring provided confidence building, encouragement, and emotional support.

The most common mentoring practices were building confidence, offering encouragement, and providing emotional support. There was no mention of how these behaviors relate to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards five core propositions. The authors recommend that Nationally Board certified teachers receive training on informal and formal mentoring practices as mentoring is not currently a focus of earning the certificate.

### **Themes Shaping Teacher Retention**

Researchers have sought to understand the influences that contribute to an accelerating rate of teachers leaving the profession. Perryman and Calvert (2020) researched the dispositions of incoming teachers and their eventual reasons for leaving the field. The authors created a qualitative questionnaire that evaluated data from 1200 respondents. The NVIVO software was used to code themes and create word clouds to analyze the frequency and context of respondents' answers. Researchers found that the three most influential factors for entering teaching were wanting to make a difference, wanting to work with young people, and teaching because they loved the subject. When it comes to expected rewards, teachers shared they were happy to work with children and would help them achieve. These themes demonstrated intrinsic feelings of altruism. Citing reasons for leaving the profession, teachers shared they were burdened by the workload, unable to achieve a work-life balance, and felt unsupported. Of the 1200 respondents, 51% shared the theme that teaching makes them ill. The authors share that most teachers entering the profession were aware of the workload challenge but not worried. They share that it is the environment that the workload occurs that exacerbates the workload concern. Work from Guarino and Santibafiez (2006) is cited when sharing

that quality induction programs can reduce teacher drop-out rates. The authors share that most teachers do not understand the reality of the teaching job before joining the field. The current study will seek to understand the acquisition of Discourses the mentee may demonstrate that will help prepare new teachers for the reality of the job.

Geiger and Pivovarova (2018) also analyzed factors that teachers cite for leaving the profession. The authors pulled data from 1,400 teachers from 2011-2014 that participated in the Teacher Advancement Program in Arizona. These teachers worked in schools that were considered “high needs” (p.610). The authors processed quantitative and qualitative data to investigate working conditions and teacher retention trends. It was noted that mentoring was somewhat important in considering whether to leave the profession. Mentoring was found to be valued more by teachers in low-socioeconomic schools. Another key variable on retention was a lack of satisfaction in support from school leadership. Teachers shared that when administrative support was low, they valued feedback from their mentors more. Geiger and Pivoyarova (2018) share, “beneficial and satisfying relationships between teachers and their mentors might provide additional incentives to stay in their schools. This could also imply that feeling supported at their schools is an influential aspect of teachers’ decisions to stay or leave” (p.618). The authors share that effective mentoring may reduce teacher attrition in high-poverty and high-minority schools.

Supports exist within school systems to boost teacher competencies and retention rates. Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) conducted a study to investigate the effects of teacher induction programs on teachers’ attitudes of remaining within the profession. First-year full and part time teachers from 2003-2004, 2007-2008, and 2011-2012 were

measured to explore the instructional supports they received and their attitudes regarding the education profession. The researchers utilized data from the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Survey (BTLS). The BTLS was a longitudinal survey of early-career, not necessarily first-year, teachers. This survey sought to explore the relationship between teacher retention and induction with various teacher and school characteristics. The researchers had numerous findings. First, new teachers having a mentor reduced the chance of them leaving the profession by 27%. Second, the number of induction supports provided to the teacher reduce the chances of the teacher leaving the profession. The instructional supports noted by the authors include communication from school leadership, having a mentor, attending beginning seminars, and having common planning time with teachers in similar curricular subjects. Rodfeldt and McQueen also note that Black teachers received 80-100% more induction supports than their White colleagues. The authors mention that while the number of instructional supports were considered with retention rates, the quality of supports in the induction process were not considered.

School districts have sought to increase their teacher retention levels by offering instructional supports, providing mentors, improving working conditions (Perryman & Calvert, 2020; Geiger and Pivovarova, 2018; Ronfeldt & McQueen 2017). From the research above, there are many variables that influence whether a teacher leaves the profession. The nature of the teaching profession varies by location, socioeconomics, and content area. School districts looking to retain their new teachers would benefit from listening to their specific needs. Otherwise, the trend of roughly half of teachers leaving the profession in the first five years will remain unchanged (Aragon, 2016). This research helps illuminate the importance of effective teacher mentoring practices and the concepts

the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence hope to implement in public schools in the coming decade to improve learning outcomes throughout the state.

### ***Induction Program Organization and Quality***

Teacher induction programs focus on developing and supporting new teachers. Andrews and Quinn (2005) sought to examine the attitudes of first-year teachers on a mentoring program. The authors compared data from mentees' experiences with a school-district assigned mentor, a principal assigned mentor, and with no mentor assigned. In a large school district serving 60,000 students, 132 new teachers were the sample for this study. A one-way variance (ANOVA) was utilized to analyze each research question. This study had four noted findings. First, mentoring programs are perceived as effective by new teachers and the training programs for mentors were perceived well by the mentors. Second, formal mentoring programs are perceived by mentors and mentees as more effective than programs that are seen as loosely organized. Most importantly, the orientation of who assigns the mentor plays a role in the perceived role of the mentoring program. The fourth finding shared those teachers assigned a mentor through the school district mentoring program felt the most supported. Teachers assigned a mentor by the principal felt less supported and teachers assigned no mentor felt the least supported. The authors cite no limitations in their study. They also stress that it is "recommended that planning and observations become a mandatory part of mentoring programs" (Andrews & Quinn, 2005, p.113). Mentors need spend time planning with their mentees and frequently assess their progress. Doing so gives room for scaffolding skills. This study provides research showing that the source of mentor assignment does play a significant role on the experience of the new teacher.

Resta, Huling, and Yeargain (2013) investigated new teachers' opinions on teaching, mentoring, and their schools as workplaces. In this study, recently retired teachers were given a caseload of 8-10 new teachers. Mentors worked half-time and received mentoring training. Five years later, the career paths of the mentored teachers were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. This data was then compared with data in the state where teachers did not receive the mentoring. The authors noted six key findings. It was discussed that forming relationships and professional communities at school improved the teachers' perceptions of the workplace environment. Consequentially, the workplace is negatively impacted by teacher turnover. In a third, teachers report feeling little support from the school district is a general support entity. This study also showed that teachers that were mentored well tend to become effective mentors themselves. In a fifth finding from the research, teachers note that instructional and emotional supports were key to helping mentees navigate their first years. Most importantly, the authors suggest that teachers would most likely not be teaching at the current moment if not for their mentoring experience. These findings speak largely to the positive, impactful influence of mentoring for new teachers. The relationships and professional communities are also related to the development of personal Discourses as described by Gee (2014a).

Also seeking to investigate the implications of new teacher induction programs, Youngs, Holdgreve- Resendez, and Hong Qian (2011) took a look at the induction structure of school districts. They sought to understand how school district policy and organization shape teacher induction experiences. Structured interviews were used to gather qualitative data in two generally low-income Michigan school districts. The

authors suggest that school district factors in planning and organizing an induction program are significant. School districts that implement clear frameworks for new teacher induction programs are likely to yield better opinions from new teachers. Similar to the findings of Loeb, Darling-Hammond, and Luczak, (2005), Holdgreve- Resendez, and Hong Qian (2011) suggest that the resources provided to teachers are a significant variable in the perceived quality of support from a school district. Lastly, school districts should develop common goals, clear instructional policies, and common curricular frameworks that provide support to new teachers.

Athanases, Abrams, Jack, Johnson, Kwock, McCurdy, and Totaro (2008) investigated the curricular elements that teacher mentoring supervisors felt need to be included in mentorship programs. The authors took a mentoring program and implemented it in some California schools. Program managers were able to meet at least nine days of the school year to collaborate on induction innovations that were implemented by the researchers. The sample was made of seven program directors running four separate induction programs. From this sample, it was shown that a scripted curriculum helped administer the mentoring program. While a scripted curriculum is perceived as an essential element, researchers stress a need to tailor the mentoring programs to local needs. For example, a school district might develop mentoring programs to target a certain demographic to improve certain skills. Also, school districts have varying staff demographics and competencies. The authors encourage the creation of customized programs and warn against one size fits all mentoring initiatives. It was emphasized this is even more critical in urban schools. As these mentoring programs

progress, mentors share those programs need careful monitoring and the ability to adapt to local needs.

Providing instructional supports to new teachers is of great benefit when the instructional supports and induction programs are carefully planned. Assigning mentors with purpose, having those mentors form relationships, and providing new teachers with resources have been identified as positive characteristics of teacher induction programs. Having clear organizational frameworks place these characteristics into use. Organizing an induction program with a clear set of objectives can have a significant, positive effect on new teachers.

### ***Mentors' and Mentees' Perceptions of Effective Mentoring Principles***

Establishing relationships and building the mentee's skills are at the heart of the mentoring experience for the mentor (Sowell, 2017). Sowell investigated the mentoring strategies used by mentors on their mentees. The purpose of this study was to understand the characteristics that were positively identified as effective practices for mentoring. The researcher interviewed a small number of subjects and collected qualitative data. The data showed that forming relationships built on trust tend to foster an effective mentoring experience. Mentors felt that new teachers needed assistance with classroom management the most and that facilitating confidence within the new teacher can improve classroom management. The mentors also felt they can support new teachers' instruction by providing resources. While this study utilized a small number of subjects and lacks power authority, it does help explain what behaviors mentors can demonstrate to improve the skills of the new teacher and the mentoring experience.

Schatz-Oppenheimer (2017) also investigated mentors' perception of the mentoring process. This study was designed to investigate the attitudes towards mentoring program from teachers. These teachers were prospective mentors for novice teachers in Israel. A sample of 170 female teachers with 5-25 years of experience were given a two-part open-ended questionnaire to collect qualitative data. Several findings were noted by the researcher. First, there is significant overlap in the mentors' view of mentoring and their teaching philosophy. Thus, they view the mentoring experience in the same purview as teaching. It was also found that teachers view mentoring as an extended process yet do not focus on the theories that shape the experience. Related to this finding, it was further discussed that teachers do not understand the complexities of the mentoring process. While genuinely committed to the mentoring process, mentors lack an understanding of how important the interpersonal relationship between mentee and mentor are to the mentee's development. Schatz-Oppenheimer shares this is a personal trait that may take years to develop. Another finding showed that teachers blur the line between evaluating and supporting the mentor. While two different skills, it is often viewed by the mentor that evaluating and supporting the mentee are the same skill. Related to mentors' skills, Schatz-Oppenheimer shares that mentors are not reflective. This is a key component of developing professionally. The author's findings illustrate the importance of the mentor's tendencies to blur teaching and mentoring. Mentors also need to be keen of their mentoring as a skill that can be improved with practice and reflection.

With regard to reflection, Heikkinen, Wilkinson, Aspors, and Bristol (2018) investigated how mentors and mentees reflect on mentoring as a social practice. Qualitative data was collected via structured interviews from research sites in Australia

and Finland. While this study featured a small sample size, it was noted that it was large enough to make scientific generalizations. The authors processed the data and noted that five core mentoring themes of opening up, facilitating, counseling, guiding, and leading emerged. These themes were suggested to be the pillars of a framework for mentoring programs. Within these pillars, teachers need to communicate and explicitly relay their personal goals, aims, and limits in the mentoring process. The authors also noted that effective mentoring requires a balance of communication and action. A major takeaway from this research is that the world of teaching is becoming more volatile and stressful. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of their social “conditions of practice” in the mentoring process (Heikkinen, Wilkinson, Aspors, & Bristol, 2018, p.10). The noted balance of communication and strategic action help keep conditions of practice in mind.

Researchers have also focused on the attitudes of the mentee in the mentoring and professional development process. For example, Manzar-Abbass, Malik, Khurshid, and Ahmad (2017) researched the opinions of mentees on their professional development and classroom behaviors. These researchers also sought to understand the differences of opinion by a teacher’s gender. Quantitative data was collected using Likert-based surveys. Survey “A” collected information on demographics, gender, and professional qualifications. Survey “B” collected information on preferred teaching behaviors. From these surveys, the researchers broke down their findings into categories of pre-instruction, instruction, and post-instruction. In pre-instruction, teachers enjoyed the benefits of maintaining a diary for reflection purposes. This was especially popular among women. In instruction, mentees felt mentoring and their mentors did not help them develop their own audio-visual resources. In post-instruction, mentees shared their

mentors did not model enhanced questioning techniques and therefore lacked best practices when interacting with students. Lastly, the mentees shared they need further development for implementing activity-based instruction. This study showed that mentees feel their mentors could model desired teaching behaviors more effectively. It is also found that mentors need to reinforce desired teaching behaviors over time.

Mentoring is a process that utilizes leadership skills. Snyder (2018) investigated the perceptions teachers have of teacher leaders. The researcher utilized two sets of qualitative data. One set of data was from nine teachers with over 20 years of experience in six different school districts. The other set of data came from 10 teachers in a separate school district. The two sets of data were identified as “early adopters” and “laggards” (p.157). From the data, it was shown that teachers look to leaders for resources and to form relationships with them. Teachers do not see teacher leaders as agents of political change. Snyder uses the analogy as teachers being enlisted military personnel while the teacher leaders are officers. The role of an administrator is multi-faceted and complex. Synder (2018) shares:

Teachers from a breadth of settings and experience consistently cited their dependence on resources with which they could improve student learning. In a day when state budgets become increasingly tight, parents become increasingly critical, and the institution of education comes increasingly under attack, administrators will similarly need to be increasingly creative in ways they provide that support. (p.162)

Providing support and resources remains a focused need of teachers. This need becomes increasingly compounded if there is a lack of funding for classroom resources.

Mentoring is a social process, yet it is also a skilled, deliberate process. Published research (Manzar-Abbass et al., 2017; Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017; Sowell 2017) shows there are a number of proven strategies mentors can demonstrate to improve the learning outcomes of the mentee. Mentees share they need help with generating resources for instruction and enjoy reflecting through diaries. Mentors view the mentoring process as similar to their teaching philosophies but need to keep in mind the deliberate process of mentoring. Mentoring should not be approached in a haphazard manner. Frameworks for mentoring should cite established research and demonstrate methodological planning for the development of the emerging mentee. These frameworks should clearly outline the expected outcomes of the mentee and the behaviors that should be demonstrated by the mentor. Administrators and teacher leaders should be mindful of their responsibilities as leaders and provide close support and resources for teacher use.

***National board for professional teaching standards certification and student learning***

The Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education requires the mentors of teachers, Master Teachers, to hold a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification (NBPTSC). Several studies have been published to investigate the role of an NBPTSC on teacher performance. Horoi and Bhai (2018) investigated the role of NBPTSC in determining successful teachers. In their study, success was defined through academic achievement of teachers' students. This study also investigated the role of an NBPTSC teacher on student learning in low-income schools. Student test scores for third through eighth grade were collected from the North Carolina public schools' education data center. The socioeconomic status of a school was identified using free and reduced meal data. Assessed areas of math and reading were

considered for this study. This study found, that on average, NBPTSC - taught students had higher scores of .04 standard deviation in math and .013 in reading. The authors note these findings are substantial when considering student knowledge. With regard to schools with low-socioeconomic status, the authors share, “at poor schools, however, we observe a negative and statistically insignificant effect of NBPTS certification. However, the standard error for the latter is considerably large such that we cannot reject this effect from the estimate for the non-poor schools” (p.1098-1099). A few limitations shape the context of findings. This study was limited due to the analyzation of two areas of many certifications the NBPTS offer. The data that was analyzed is only available in significant quantity in reading and math. This study was also limited in part due to analyzing only one state. While effective in discussion the relationship between student test scores and NBPTSC teachers, this study does not account for how the NBPTSC teacher influences test scores.

Also seeking to investigate the effectiveness of NBPTSC teachers on student learning outcomes, Houston and Kulinna (2019) analyzed the effectiveness and decision-making of physical education teachers. Researchers controlled teacher characteristics as closely as possible. The teachers had similar experience, age, race, gender, and taught in the same school district. The significant variable was the NBPTSC holder. Using a mix-methods approach, data was analyzed from the teachers’ implementation of an experimental teaching unit (ETU). The teachers agreed upon objectives for the unit and were free to plan and strategize for the implementation of the ETU. The segment of the lesson featuring the ETU was filmed. Student behaviors were quantified and qualified using a number of research-established physical education instruments. The authors share

that no statistically significant difference between the NBPTSC teacher and the non-NBPTSC teacher when observing student learning outcomes. It was also noted that “based on interviews and observations/field notes, the NBCPETs’ and non-NBCPETs’ methods of instruction and thought processes of teaching the provided ETUs were indistinguishable” (p.78). Like many of the NBPTSC curricular areas, physical education is not a typically assessed course with large-scale student data available for analyzation. While this study featured a low sample size, it provides insight for the value of an NBPTSC teacher in a typically non-assessed curriculum.

Other studies have also found the value of an NBPTSC teacher to be limited. Rouse (2008) analyzed the role of an NBPTSC teacher on student achievement levels. Rouse’s sample consisted of the quantification of 54 standardized test scores from K-8 students in reading and math. Data was farmed from the K-8 end of grade assessments. It was found that there was not a statistically significant difference between NBPTSC teachers and non-NBPTSC teachers with regard to student achievement in reading and math. Rouse’s findings clash with later studies. Similar to Horoi and Bhai, (2018) Rouse (2008) utilized standardized test scores from students in North Carolina, but Rouse focused on one school district. Teachers were controlled for years of experience, subject, and grade level, and type of licensure. Horoi and Bhai (2008) only controlled for “experience dummies and an indicator for advanced degree” (p.1194). Rouse (2008) made two recommendations from the study’s findings. First, the financial incentives tied to NBPTSC need to be investigated to determine the worth of the certification. Second, educational leaders need to closely observe and document the teaching behaviors demonstrated by the teacher. The studies from Horoi and Bhai (2008) and Rouse (2008)

only discuss the worth of the degree in quantitative measures of student learning outcomes while Houston and Kulinna (2019) analyze the behaviors of the teacher.

Shifting to a lens of professional development, the NBPTSC has been examined for its role in teacher professional behaviors. Park, Oliver, Johnson, Graham, and Oppong (2007) sought to investigate the interactions teachers have regarding the NBPTSC developmental process and how NBPTSC influences teacher professional development. The researchers collected data from structured interviews using 14 teachers. Teachers were either considering obtaining the NBPTSC, currently in the process of obtaining the NBPTSC, or have been awarded the certification. Findings show that the NBPTSC process created more reflective teachers, increased professional discourse within the professional community, raised standards for teaching performance, and show teachers were likely to engage in collaboration. The authors also suggest that NBPTSC teachers are seen as role models that foster the study's findings in their workplaces. This study shows that the NBPTSC increases desired professional learning behaviors among teachers.

The reviewed research demonstrates significant amount of contradictory research regarding the worth of NBPTSC. Assessed content areas where student test scores were considered showed value in the certification (Horoi and Bhai, 2018). Park, Oliver, Johnson, Graham, and Oppong (2007) found that the certification increased Discourses that positively influence professional behavior. However, some studies found the certification had little to no value (Houston & Kulinna, 2019; Rouse 2008). Considerations of implications on student achievement remain to be concretely understood. The financial worth of the NBPTSC also remains a question to be addressed

in a manner that states whether the certification is worth incentivizing by school districts. There is little to no research on the role of NBPTSC in a mentoring capacity. This is significant due to the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education declaring those with the NBPTSC are to be the designated leaders of teachers (Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, 2019).

## **2.7 Summary**

The relevant literature illustrates the views and needs that teachers have of those who lead them. Moreover, the literature shows the behaviors of teacher leaders that are sought out for teacher development. What is also shown by the research is a need to develop structured induction programs that are clearly organized and based on established research in order to retain highly qualified teachers. Using the NBPTSC as a mechanism to designate teacher leaders is problematic. Research exists to support and resist the claim that NBPTSC increases student learning. There is research to support the claim that the certification does increase positive teacher development behaviors. This study is designed to investigate a teacher retention mechanism proposed by the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence. Specifically, is there a difference in teaching skills aligned with the five National Board Certification standards and retention aspirations between mentees who had a teacher with National Board Certification and a mentee whose mentor did not have the certification? The related research will be coupled with this study's findings when discussed in a later chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Overview of Study**

In order to help retain new teachers, mentoring programs have been established using existing teachers as mentors. As teachers with less experience are more likely to leave or change schools, a quality mentoring program may be a significant influence for reducing teacher mobility (Shen, 1997). New teachers having a mentor reduced the odds of leaving the profession by 27% as compared with teachers not assigned a mentor (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017).

To bridge the gap in research, this study focuses on the influence of a National Board Certified teacher on mentees' practice relating to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standard's five core propositions. This study also examines the effects mentors may have on a mentees' attitudes of remaining in the field of education. Limited to no research exists for the influences National Board Certification on mentoring abilities. National Board Certification aims to improve and standardize the classroom practices of a teacher. While the certification does address professional responsibilities as a National Board Certified Teacher, it does not make for any form of mentoring instruction. The Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence assumes this credentialing will improve the quality of mentors. Since Maryland's Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education views this certification as a means for creating

“teacher leaders,” the current study shares that it is worth investigating the certification’s influences on the mentees it is designed to help develop and retain.

### **3.2 Research Purpose Statement**

The purpose of the current study was to investigate how mentees of National Board Certified Teachers view their teaching practices related to the five National Board for Professional Teaching Standard’s Five Core Propositions compared to mentees whose mentor did not have the certification. This study also sought to understand if mentees’ whose mentor earned National Board Certification express more confidence in remaining in the profession beyond two years compared to a mentee who did not have a mentor with National Board Certification.

### **3.3 Research Questions**

- 1) Do mentees who had a mentor with National Board Certification describe their own teaching habits that are more aligned with the five core propositions of National Board Certification compared to a mentee whose mentor did not have the certification?
- 2) Do mentees whose mentor earned National Board Certification express more confidence in remaining in the profession beyond two years compared to a mentee who did not have a mentor with National Board Certification?

### **3.4 Research Design and Intervention**

The research design for this study was founded in investigative action research. Action research is conducted by insiders within an institution or group to address a problematic situation (Herr & Anderson, 2015). This study was investigative in nature and appropriate for understanding core attitudes that teachers have towards their mentors

and the teaching profession. Yau Fai Ho, Tin Hung Ho, & Siu Man (2006) share, “investigative research functions as a generalized approach to problem solving” (p.31).

This study was an investigation of an intervention that is designed to increase teacher retention and improve new teachers’ instructional abilities. One group consisted of teachers whose mentor held a current National Board Certification and the other group consisted of teachers who mentor did not have the certification. To control for the effects of the National Board Certification, teachers with an expired National Board Certification were not permitted to participate in either group. A qualitative format was adopted by this study to investigate the research questions.

### **3.5 Research Expectations**

Relating to the first research question, the researcher was interested to see if there was any difference in the data related to the five standards for National Board Certification between the mentees who had a National Board Certified Teacher as a mentor and those who did not. Related to the second research question, it was hypothesized that there would be no difference in attitudes of remaining in the field beyond two years between the two groups. Existing research (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007; Houston & Kulinna, 2019; Rouse, 2008) casts doubt on the effectiveness of the National Board Certification on student learning outcomes and teacher effectiveness in other content areas. This is important because in Maryland, the current legislation recently signed into law will place those with a current National Board Certification as leaders of teachers. Specifically, it will place these teachers in mentorship roles. As there is very limited existing research on the role of National Board Certification on mentoring abilities, the current study can provide insights

for policymakers, school administrators, and researchers interested in developing teacher mentor programs. The results could be also of interest for Maryland teachers considering career options beyond the classroom.

### **3.6 Participants**

This study utilized participants across the State of Maryland. Participants were certificated teachers with 0-2 years of experience. Teachers must also be contracted to currently teach by a public school district in Maryland. Participants must have been assigned a mentor and worked with the mentor for at least six months.

A purposeful sample was used to identify the sample for this study. This study anticipated a need for 22 participants to thoroughly investigate the research questions. These participants were recruited through public announcements, social media postings, or personally recruited by the researcher to participate. A call for volunteers was also posted on Reddit via the “r/teachers” subreddit. Participants were not compensated for their participation. All participants completed a screening questionnaire to determine eligibility. Primary eligibility concerns were that the teacher is currently employed in Maryland as a K-12 public school teacher, had a mentor, and is a new teacher with no more than two full years of experience.

Table 3.1 *Participants by District*

School District	Number of Participants
Baltimore City	6
Baltimore County	6
Howard County	5
Worcester County	2

Anne Arundel County	1
Carroll County	1
Montgomery County	1

The 22 participants were split into two groups. It was anticipated that any information gathered past 11 in each group would be redundant. Of the 22 participants, half had a National Board Certificated mentor in the past two years in an area they are currently teaching. The other half were teachers whose mentor did not have the certification but at least earned a Master's degree. Under the recently enacted legislation, a "Master Teacher" will have at least possessed a current National Board Certification in an area he/she currently teaches (Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, 2019). There is no current provision in Maryland for what types of certifications or degrees a mentor must have other than a current teaching certificate. The decision to require a Master's degree for the control group was in response to the researcher noting most, if not all, mentors of current teachers held at least that degree.

### **3.7 Data Collection Measures, Instruments and Tools**

This study utilized one data collection tool to gather data for the two research questions. This streamlined the data collection process for the participants in order to reduce the time needed for participation. First, participants completed a screening questionnaire using Google forms. Once accepted for participation, participants completed a second survey using Google forms. The survey contained open-response questions and Likert-style questions. A seven-point scale on the Likert questions allowed

for a neutral opinion to be expressed (Guy & Norvell, 1977). Teachers were urged to complete the survey within one month.

The open-ended questions and the Likert scale were used to address both research questions. Questions were written carefully as not to lead the participants' responses. The survey addressed the mentee's perceptions of their own instructional practices and opinions of remaining a teacher beyond two years. For instructional practices, the questions on the form targeted the five National Board Certification standards. The National Board Standards (2021) share that:

- 1) Teachers are committed to their students and their learning.
- 2) Teachers know the subjects that they teach and how to teach them.
- 3) Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
- 4) Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience
- 5) Teachers are members of learning communities.

Table 3.2 *Research Questions and Data Tools*

<b>ALIGNMENT TABLE</b>	RQ1: Do mentees who had a mentor with National Board Certification describe their own teaching habits that are more aligned with the five core propositions of National Board Certification compared to a mentee whose mentor did not have the certification?	RQ 2: Do mentees whose mentor earned National Board Certification express more confidence in remaining in the profession beyond two years compared to a mentee who did not have a mentor with National Board Certification?
Open-ended survey	X	X
Likert scale		X

Table 3.3 *Data Tool Question Alignment*

<b>Core Proposition (standard)</b>	<b>Data Tool Question</b>
1) Teachers are committed to students and their learning.	<p>What might be an adjective to describe your perception of your mentor's commitment to students and their learning? Please describe why you chose that adjective.</p> <p>What would be an adjective that you would use to describe your commitment to your students and their learning? Please provide a short response to support your choice.</p>
2) Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students	How do you think your students best learn? What conditions make for the best learning classroom? What strategy did you learn from your mentor that you frequently use now?
3) Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning	What have you found to be the most authentic way to assess students' learning? How did you first learn about this? Did your mentor have any influence on how you assess your students?
4) Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience	In what ways has your teaching evolved since you started teaching and what has influenced these changes?
5) Teachers are members of learning communities	Do you feel that you are a part of a learning community? If so, do you feel that you have a role in that community?

### **3.8 Research Procedure**

This study was an investigation of an intervention that is designed to increase teacher retention and improve new teachers' instructional practices. The Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education assumes that having mentors with the National Board Certification will help retain teachers and improve their instructional practices by aligning teaching practices with the five National Board standards. One group consisted of teachers whose mentor had National Board Certification. The other group had a mentor without a National Board Certification but with a Master's degree. To control for the effects of the National Board Certification, teachers with an expired National Board Certification were not permitted to participate in either group. This study utilized a narrative research design. Participants are not randomly assigned a treatment as the National Board Certification process is not a treatment that can be assigned in a timeframe suitable to this study.

The control group of teachers without National Board Certification represent how teacher leaders (mentors of new teachers) are selected. Mentors are tenured teachers with a Master's degree. The experimental group represents the intervention created by Maryland's Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education. The commission shares that those teachers with National Board Certification will mentor in a way that "the people they have mentored will be unusually capable" (Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, 2019, p.64). By comparing the results of qualitative data of the two groups, this study may help understand the potential influence of National Board Certified teachers on new teachers.

Both the control and experimental groups participated in self-paced surveys in the spring of 2021. It was anticipated to have all data collected prior to May 1, 2021.

Participants were given one month to complete the survey. Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend avoiding undue harm to participants. In this case, all teachers were in a hybrid learning environment. This learning environment, as observed by the researcher, is stressful to many teachers. In giving an extended timeframe for participants to complete the surveys, it was hoped that this will reduce stress and produce untainted data.

Teachers were contacted directly by the researcher with an offer to participate in the study. Throughout April, the researcher contacted those interested and explained the study. Participants completed a screening tool to ensure they are eligible to participate. Potential participants must be in year one or two (with a minimum of six months with the mentor) of their teaching career and have been assigned a mentor by a team leader, principal, or school district. Using a school district email and Google Form, participants completed an agreement to participate. Participants had one month to participate in the electronic survey.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Creswell (2018) recommends that researchers “respect the site, and disrupt as little as possible” (p.147). The author was in a fully online teaching environment for the foreseeable future. The feedback received by the author from many teachers as the union representative was generally negative regarding the increased workload. By asking for research subjects, participation in the current study might increase their stress/workload. Creswell also shares that authors should “avoid going native” (p.152). In doing so, this ensures a fair interpretation of data. The researcher needs to leave bias behind. As a union

representative loosely working with the proposed legislation in the current study, the researcher was mindful of undue influences his position may have on the participants.

Data from participants' responses was organized into groups onto a Microsoft Word document (National Board Certified teachers and those without the certification) so all identifiable traits are removed. If the information is lost, stolen, or compromised, little to no harm will be done to the participants. Participation in voluntary studies cannot be used for discipline, promotion, or evaluation unless the participant uses the thank-you email as an evaluative artifact at their evaluative meeting once every three years. All information related to this study will be housed in a password protected Google account specifically used for this study. The principal investigator will be the only person with access to this information. Data will be held for two years and then the account will be deleted.

### **3.10 Role of the Researcher**

In the current study, the researcher served as an impartial agent for collecting data during the interviews and in the selection of research participants. The current study addressed topics that are of relevance to the researcher and participants. Creswell & Creswell (2018) share that the researcher should not use a research site where the researcher has vested interests. The author has some vested interest in my research and research site. However, action research studies typically use convenience samples close to the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher is also a member of a union with interests in legislation related to the research questions. The author was confident these interests would not influence the tools used for data collection and the data analysis.

### **3.11 Treatment, Processing and Analysis of Data**

Data from the interviews were coded using deductive coding. To ensure a bias-free analyzation of the data, the data was coded blindly. Prior to completing the electronic survey, the participant used a Google form to create a unique five-digit, six-character personal identification number (PIN) including a letter of their choosing and tie it to the participant's name. The participant also shared whether their mentor had National Board Certification or not and submitted the form. Next, the participant entered the PIN on the separate electronic survey and completed the survey with the open-ended responses and the Likert questions. The researcher then coded the data from the survey. Once all coding is done, the researcher sorted the data by whether the mentees' mentor earned National Board Certification or not. This process removed any coding bias from the researcher.

Initial coding should be used to allow ideas to emerge (Charmaz, 2006). Following coding, codes will be sorted into categories for analyzation. Themes will be analyzed from the categories by the researcher for inferencing and comparison with existing research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data from the survey will be processed qualitatively. This includes the Likert scale questions. While the data from these questions are number based, they represent qualitative traits. The data will be analyzed with existing research for meaning. Similarities and differences found between the two groups will be discussed in a later chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA: FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Overview of Study**

Teacher retention rates in Maryland are a concern to several stakeholders in Maryland. Prior to their third year of teaching, 47% of new teachers will not return to the profession (Kirwan & Hise, 2020). Maryland does not produce enough teachers on its own and imports teachers from other states more than it creates (*Baltimore Sun Staff*, 2019). This action research study examined a proposed program for increasing teacher retention rates that would create “teacher leaders.” These “teacher leaders” are to be of the highest quality by earning a National Board Certification and would be effective mentors for new teachers (Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, 2019). Two research questions guided this study.

Research Question 1: Do mentees who had a mentor with National Board Certification describe their own teaching habits more aligned with the five core propositions of National Board Certification compared to a mentee whose mentor did not have the certification?

Research Question 2: Do mentees whose mentor earned National Board Certification express more confidence in remaining in the profession beyond two years compared to a mentee who did not have a mentor with National Board Certification?

## **4.2 Findings of the Study**

This section will detail the findings of this action research study and the potential influence of National Board Certification on mentees. Narrative inquiry was used to present data as stories and themes within those stories were analyzed. The findings suggest that mentees with or without National Board Certification mentorship expressed similar professional practices related to the five National Board Propositions. Additionally, mentees whose mentor had the National Board Certification expressed slightly higher levels of agreement that they would remain in the profession and professional fulfillment compared to mentees whose mentor did not have the certification. This section of the study will contain charts and tables that detail findings that explore the themes of teacher retention, acquisition of Discourses through the zone of proximal development, and teacher mentorship as they relate to the research questions.

## **4.3 Intervention Analyzed**

The role of a teacher's mentor possessing National Board Certification was the variable for analysis in this study. The main goal of this study was to investigate the impact of National Board Certification on mentees' professional dispositions. Specifically, analyzing the acquisition of Discourses as described in theories from James Gee, Lev Vygotsky, and Jerome Bruner. Maryland's Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education has assumed that these "Master Teachers" with National Board Certification will be able to more effectively lead and mentor new teachers than a mentor not possessing the certification.

#### 4.4 General Findings and Results

Data was collected from a Google form where participants provided data in the form of short text and Likert response questions. The data was blindly coded by the principal investigator to reduce bias. The findings below provide insight into themes that address professional fulfillment, teacher competencies as related to the five National Board for Professional Teaching standards, and attitudes for remaining in education.

#### 4.5 Research Question 1: Professional Teaching Standards Acquisition

Do mentees who had a mentor with National Board Certification describe their own teaching habits that are more aligned with the five core propositions of National Board Certification compared to a mentee whose mentor did not have the certification?

Table 4.1 *National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Five Core Propositions*

Core Proposition	Expected behavior/practice
Core Proposition One	Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
Core Proposition Two	Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students
Core Proposition Three	Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning
Core Proposition Four	Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience
Core Proposition Five	Teachers are members of learning communities

For core proposition one, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2016) shares:

Educators are thus passionate about building meaningful relationships with young people so students can advance their understanding and experience success.

Teachers know that ongoing achievement depends on their conviction in the value

and dignity of all human beings as well as the potential that exists within each child. They therefore remain attentive to human variability, its influence on learning, and the interconnectedness of people in different contexts. (p.12)

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 illustrate what new teachers notice in their mentor and how they view their own teaching practice. In order for acquisition to occur, the mentee needs to recognize that behavior or trait in their mentor (Gee, 2014).

Themes of dedication, relationship-building, empathy, and a passion for learning for were analyzed from respondents addressing the first standard. Participants did not demonstrate a difference when describing their perceptions of their mentors or themselves with regard to the mentors' possession of a National Board Certificate. In viewing their mentor, both groups expressed themes that their mentor was motivated, thoughtful, caring, and committed. Responses from both groups included themes of dedication, passion, and empathy when describing their mentor. In considering their own professional attitudes, no difference in attitudes was observed between the two groups.

Table 4.2 *Standard One Results – Perception of Mentor*

<b>Mentor With Certification</b>	<b>Mentor Without Certification</b>
Precise – “She really knew what she was taking about from her experiences with teaching.”	Balanced – “. I love the way she was able to build relationships with each and everyone of her students and have fun with them, but then she did a good job with holding them accountable when needed.”
Diligent – “My mentor is dedicated to making education fun for her learners while challenging them with new goals for improvement.”	Thoughtful – “Very close to the same reasons I choose enthusiastic. They care
Available – “He has always been there to guide me.”	

<p>Heartfelt – “I believe my mentor had a strong love of teaching and got a lot of gratification from being a mentor to new teachers.”</p> <p>Endless Support – “She was available for me anytime.”</p> <p>Determined – “My mentor is one of the most determined individuals I have ever met. She is determined to not only have every student succeed, but have each staff member succeed as well.”</p> <p>Nonpartisan</p> <p>Driven – “My mentor teacher was always trying to find new activities that would fit his students, always trying to be better.”</p> <p>Fiery – “I chose that adjective because it is clear that she has earned her students respect and that she is committed to holding her students to the highest standard.”</p> <p>Understanding – “My mentor seems to be going with the flow and not penalizing the students for the crazy year we have had.”</p>	<p>about their students, their learning, and would do anything to help them succeed.”</p> <p>Balanced - “Very close to the same reasons I choose enthusiastic. They care about their students, their learning, and would do anything to help them succeed.”</p> <p>Loving – “I believe that she truly loves what she does and her students.”</p> <p>Unknown – “In our meetings she seems interested and motivated to keep students learning, but the focus is often more on my teaching practices instead of class learning goals.”</p> <p>Serious – “My mentor is very serious about the students' learning and especially about intentionally lesson planning to improve student learning outcomes.”</p> <p>Talented – “my mentor has a wealth of knowledge and experience as well as access to resources and connections to make the teaching experience better.”</p> <p>Flexible</p> <p>Committed</p> <p>Supportive</p>
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Table 4.3 *Standard One Results – Perception of Self as a Mentee*

Mentor With Certification	Mentor Without Certification
<p>Compassionate – “I really care for my students on a personal level as well as to help them learn the content.”</p> <p>Heartfelt</p> <p>Overwhelming - “When I was a public school teacher I felt an extremely deep sense of responsibility and duty to my students and the art of teaching.”</p> <p>Unwavering – “I have supported my students all the time (weekends, evenings, over breaks).”</p> <p>Passionate – “I dedicate time in the classroom and outside of the classroom to create engaging lessons that incorporate multiple subject areas and multisensory activities in order to further my learners' curiosity and development.”</p> <p>Encouraging – “This year has been extremely difficult for the students and whether they are happy as can be or really struggling most days, I have been consistently encouraging and positive.”</p> <p>“Motivated to find new ways to reach potential.”</p> <p>“My adjective for the commitment to my students would be ‘passionate’. My passion for my students comes in many different forms. My passion is reflected just as much when they are doing well as when they are not. I want my students to</p>	<p>Transparent</p> <p>Dedicated</p> <p>Dedicated</p> <p>Total</p> <p>Empathetic – “I strive to empathize with their situations and feelings to best support their learning in and outside the classroom.”</p> <p>“I would say my commitment is strong”</p> <p>“An adjective I would use to describe my commitment to my students learning is knowledgeable. I feel that for starters I do a great job with getting to know each of my students and their interests, but I also know the different ways each of them learn. Therefore, I am able to implement this into daily instruction in ways that are developmentally appropriate for each student.”</p> <p>Enthusiastic- “I care greatly about my students and their committed success in their learning. I am an enthusiastic teacher and I try to provide the absolute best education I can to my students.”</p> <p>Committed but struggling</p> <p>Significant – “I spend a lot of time thinking about how much my students are learning, how I can adjust, and how I can</p>

<p>be the best they can be. I nurture their potentials by holding them accountable, giving them the tools they need, and cheering on their successes.”</p> <p>Passionate – “I have always been passionate about my students. Whether that means helping them get the best grades possible, or forming relationships, I am always there for my students.”</p> <p>Dedication: “I never stop looking for new ways to teach more effectively”</p>	<p>better engage them. I also spend a lot of time this year reaching out to students to check in about their overall mental health/wellbeing.”</p> <p>Determined – “I want to see them be successful beyond academics. I want them to have good, meaningful, well paid jobs.”</p>
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Through the lens of Gee’s discourse theory, certain acceptable behaviors or personality traits can be acquired for membership to belong in a group (Gee, 2014, 2015a). Commitment to students and their learning may use varying adjective or verbs, but all of the descriptions that mentees used of themselves and their mentors demonstrate an attention to traits of those who belong in the teaching profession. Both groups demonstrated professional Discourses aligned with the criteria established by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in standard one. The groups used the adjectives of *passion*, *enthusiasm*, *empathy*, and *dedication*. One participant with a mentor possessing the National Board Certification shared they felt overwhelmed with responsibility while a participant with a mentor without the certification shared they were committed, but struggling. No participant from either group expressed attitudes from themselves and their opinions of their mentors’ Discourses that were not aligned with standard one. Regardless of their mentor’s credentials, both groups recognized positive Discourses from their mentors that, according to Gee (2014), will be acquired for identity development.

For proposition two, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2016) shares, “accomplished teachers use their knowledge of the most appropriate ways to present subject matter through strategies and techniques such as demonstrations, experiments, analogies and metaphors, interactive learning, and appropriate uses of technology” (p.19). Teachers need to be able to understand their content area and how their students learn best in that area. Demonstrating a willingness to instruct through specific strategies to improve learning outcomes relative to a content area is a competency expressed in standard two. Those specific strategies are not defined by the standard.

Table 4.4 *Standard Two Results*

Mentor With Certification	Mentor Without Certification
<p>“It truly depends on the student and their perception of the subject coming into the class. Some students love physical education and come into class wanting to play and move, while others would rather do the written work associated with the class. I would say the majority of my students learn best through application. The best conditions for a classroom include a knowledgeable and approachable teacher, engaged students, and content that can be explored through discussion and movement. A strategy that I learned from my mentor was to include all students in every way possible.”</p> <p>“They learn best when the instructor models in a clear way”</p> <p>“I think my students best learn through activity. A classroom that is neatly set up</p>	<p>“I think my students best learn in a one on one setting where I can take the extra time to sit with them and break a problem down. The way my mentor teacher and I have set this up is that often, when the students are working on an assignment independently, I will open a breakout room for them to join for individual questions and sometimes call individual students in with me who need the support.”</p> <p>“I think my students learn best by doing and exploring. I truly feel that when students are engaged in hands on learning experiences they benefit most from them. One strategy that I learned from my mentor that I frequently use is choice. It is so important for children to have choice with their learning so that they feel involved and like they have a say.”</p>

<p>makes for the best learning classroom, so when students come into the gym they know they're here to learn and also have fun.”</p> <p>“My students learn best in the physical environment. They enjoy creative lessons that involve real world situations. I haven't learned many strategies from my mentor.”</p> <p>“I always approached teaching in my classroom from a place of respect and understanding of the students before me. I was a teacher but felt very strongly about the mentorship aspect of my role, as well as the importance of teaching my students how to think that was at least as important, if not more so, than the content I was teaching them. I believe taking that attitude into a classroom creates a successful learning environment and student experience. My mentor encouraged me in this attitude, and I think she had a fairly similar perspective on teaching. There were certainly some specific pedagogical skills she taught me, but I've forgotten what they were.”</p> <p>“I think my students learn best when the lesson is interactive. Since I work with 11-12 year olds, I need my lessons to be interactive, rather than purely lecturing. When my students have the opportunity to move around and engage with other classmates, they do significantly better during the course of the class.”</p> <p>“Students best learn when there are visuals and manipulatives to use. A quiet</p>	<p>“Students best learn when they can relate to a subject. The best conditions for my classroom's learning environment is quiet and calm. I try to use predictable routines to keep my students ready to learn.”</p> <p>“I think my students best learn when they understand the importance in what they're doing and that I care. I always start with a feelings check to gauge where each student is entering into the space”</p> <p>“They learn in a relational and class culture environment that they feel ownership of and their voice matters and has real consequence. I learned how to deepen how I honor what my students love and why they are in my classroom.”</p> <p>“I think my students learn best when they are interested and actively engaged in the unit. The conditions for best learning in my classroom are when there is a routine and clear expectations. The strategy I learned from my mentor that I use today is to build a personal connection with my students because the students are more willing to pay attention and participate when they know you have a genuine interest in their lives “</p> <p>“My students learn best when I make the content interactive. I learned different ways to make the activities more engaging and interactive from my mentor. Additionally, we have a large ESOL population. My mentor taught me the importance of having visual aids for those scholars.”</p>
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and calm environment is the best condition to learn in with little distractions. a strategy I use now from my mentor are to provide different ways to access information. EX: self-reading and a read aloud with captions.”	
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Participants demonstrated no difference between the two groups in expressing confidence that they know how their students learn best in their content areas. When asked if they use strategies taught by their mentor that they use now, two participants from the group with a mentor having the certification shared that they do. One response from the group who had a mentor with National Board Certification shared, “there were certainly some specific pedagogical skills she taught me, but I've forgotten what they were.” Another participant who had a mentor with the certification shared, “I haven't learned many strategies from my mentor.” No participants with a mentor not possessing the certification shared these attitudes. Three participants with a mentor without the certification shared that there were skills they used from their mentor. The mentees with a mentor not possessing a National Board Certification made one more reference to skills learned from their mentor than the group who had a mentor with National Board Certification. Participants with a mentor possessing National Board Certification were more likely to share that they forgot or never learned strategies from their mentor.

Overall, both groups demonstrated consistent professional themes that are presented in National Board Standard Two even if they shared that they did not learn specific instructional strategies from their mentor. They demonstrated themes of ensuring sound instructional practices, improving authentic student engagement within their

respective disciplines, and using relationships to improve learning outcomes. These themes contribute to standard two by ensuring effective instructional practices in relation to content area. These themes are part of acquirable Discourses and skills that are adopted over time (Gee, 2014). Mentors are able to develop and build leadership skills of their mentees. In this case, mentors can use scaffolding theory as James Bruner theorized to improve professional practices of their mentees. Dzikowski (2014) shares, “the benefits of both mentors and mentees are extensive, ranging from increased self-esteem, awareness, insight, and professional skills to reduction of stress” (p.351).

Relating to standard three, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards shares that to:

Track their success, teachers carefully monitor activity within the learning environment—observing student interactions, evaluating classroom performance, assessing all aspects of student development, and measuring learning outcomes relative to objectives. To increase students’ success, teachers diligently manage the systems, programs, and resources that support every educational endeavor—fostering positive relationships in and out of the classroom, making sure classroom materials are used appropriately, maintaining schedules, ensuring student safety, and otherwise maintaining all aspects of a well-functioning learning environment. (p.24)

Table 4.5 *Standard Three Results*

Mentor With Certification	Mentor Without Certification
<p>“The most authentic way to assess student learning is definitely just through observation. Formative assessment is a best practice, but it isn’t necessarily the most effective. I like to use a mixture of formative and formal assessments. I learned about all types of assessment in college during my post-baccalaureate, which was at (redacted educational institution). My mentor really did not have much to say about assessment.</p> <p>“Informal assessments are useful because they are less stressful for students. I learned during my first year with my mentor that formal assessments are not the only way to check for understanding.”</p> <p>“The best way is through observation with a 3 or 4 point scale based on the elements you are teaching that class. I learned this through mentor teacher, and yes he had an influence because he did it so easily.”</p> <p>“Review games created through Nearpod. I learned about Nearpod during a Professional Development at the beginning of the school year. No, my mentor did not have any influence on how I assess students. I just follow the curriculum that was provided to me and cater it to my special needs students.”</p> <p>“One of my most common forms of assessment were written responses, usually 1 paragraph to 1 1/2 pages, depending on the topic, that allowed the</p>	<p>“I am not sure if I still found the most authentic way. My county curriculum involves a variety of assessment types and they all seem to work differently for different students.”</p> <p>“Formative assessment through things such as exit tickets, pear deck, levels of understanding. Some of these were learned through my mentor, but others were learned by getting to know my students.”</p> <p>“I use peardeck for virtual instruction, and I still use it for hybrid. I learned about this from a PD earlier in the year.”</p> <p>“One way I found to be helpful is to see them catch my mistakes. Showing they have such a grasp on the concept that they can immediately see issues with work/how to fix the issue. Daily exit tickets are also helpful especially after re-teaching a concept. My mentor did not have any influence in this.”</p> <p>“Exit tickets - my mentor encourages the use of exit tickets but I was already using them prior. My mentor was never very helpful in terms of helping me figure out how to evaluate students or how to adjust when students did poorly on assessments.”</p> <p>“To have them explain their thought process on how they completed a task and how they came to arrive at a solution.</p>

<p>student to give a complete answer and showed their thought process. I don't remember where I first learned about this, but it was likely a combination of pedagogical training and my own teaching preferences. My mentor would give me her thoughts and advice on my assessments, and I would incorporate them at times.”</p> <p>“Typically I will use a traditional way of assessing my students. I will use exit cards, quizzes, and tests to see their knowledge. My mentor did teach me, however, that I should try to assess my students every day in some form. Whether that is through an exit card or a formal assessment, I should be able to measure my students’ success each class.”</p> <p>“Multiple choice with visuals with verbal prompting and modifications if necessary. Yes, my mentor did have an influence on how I asses (she used the same format)”</p> <p>“I assess my students through a variety of assignments in different forms. I have found that the most authentic way to assess my students' is to let them choose from a project-based choice board which allows them to pick between different forms of assessment (writing, recording, art, collages, etc.). I learned this technique in my preparatory program.”</p> <p>“I learned that the most authentic way to assess students learning is to do a Kahoot review and give them an assessment that I don't call a "test". Too many of them overthink when they hear the word "test".</p>	<p>Yes, my mentor made me realize that students must understand the process rather than memorize an answer.”</p> <p>“Formative assessment in my opinion is the way to go. Check in with student thumbs up. Quick check point practice grades.”</p> <p>“Performance exams where students exemplify their learning by performing using concepts they have learned in class in a small group setting.”</p> <p>“Exit quizzes are the best way to assess my students’ learning. My mentor did use this in his classes but not every class”</p> <p>“I love using a cold call system when the culture of the classroom is built on risk taking.”</p>
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My mentor did not have an influence on how I assess my students.”	
“In my co-taught class the gen ed teacher would have check ins at the beginning, middle, and end of a lesson.”	

From this standard, themes of effective assessment, diligent planning and preparation, and resource management were examined. Both groups expressed all of these themes in their responses but some differences emerged. First, the mentees who had a mentor with National Board Certification described their practices as they relate to standard three in a more specific manner than those whose mentor did not have the certification. They frequently provided more information on various strategies that they use beyond using a Peardeck or exit ticket. Second, they were also able to provide more variance in the strategies they use (nine) than their colleagues whose mentor did not have the certification (five). Third, there was a mixed response if the mentors’ strategies were explicitly used by the mentee or the mentee did not learn strategies from their mentor.

Table 4.6 *Mentees’ Use of Strategies from their Mentor in Standard Three*

	Frequency of sharing the mentor did help with an assessment or instructional strategies the mentee uses.	Frequency of sharing the mentor did not help with an assessment or instructional strategies the mentee uses.
Mentees’ whose mentor had National Board Certification	5	4
Mentees’ whose mentor did not have National Board Certification	3	2

Learning assessment strategies from a mentor is an example of interactional learning in an authentic environment (Gee, 2015b). It is also an example of teachers learning from a more knowledgeable other that improves professional practices (Watson, 2013). Mentees learning from a mentor with the certification shared slightly more examples (five) of learning positive instructional practices from their mentor than those whose mentor did not have the certification (three). However, the group whose mentor had the certification noted two instances of not learning a strategy from their mentor. Those mentees whose mentor had certification generally made more references to their mentor when reflecting upon their instructional and assessment strategies.

For the fourth core proposition, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2016) shares:

Accomplished educators seek to expand their repertoires, deepen their knowledge and skills, and become wiser in rendering judgments. They remain inventive in their teaching, recognizing the need to welcome new findings and extend their learning as professionals. Accomplished teachers are ready to incorporate ideas and methods developed by other educators to support their instructional goals—namely, the advancement of student learning and the improvement of their practice. What exemplifies excellence, then, is a reverence for the craft, a recognition of its complexities, and a commitment to lifelong learning and reflection. (p.31)

Table 4.7 *Standard Four Results*

Mentor With Certification	Mentor Without Certification
<p>“I have become more understanding and patient with the learning process of my students because they are willing to learn but are subject to different circumstances.”</p> <p>“My behavior management has evolved. I think experience is a big part of it, sometimes I wasn't as strict as I needed to be so I worked on that and it has improved big time.”</p> <p>“The global pandemic has helped me evolve as a teacher by learning how to use other programs to make online learn conducive to my students and their learning needs.”</p> <p>“As time went on, especially during the end of my first year and into my second year, I spent much more time planning and preparing lessons, worked hard on setting firm objectives and aligning them with the rest of my lesson, assessments, etc., and generally became stronger in the pedagogy of teaching. Part of this was the natural course of getting more used to the work of teaching, and part of it was the result of my administration forcing me to hand in lessons early, picking through them with a fine-toothed comb, and hammering me during classroom observations for all kinds of errors, real or, unfortunately, often exaggerated or just made up. I tried hard to maintain that strong mentorship focus throughout, but that became more and more difficult,</p>	<p>“My teaching has evolved in so many ways since I have started teaching. Considering I have never had a full "normal" year of teaching, I have realized that a lot of strategies I learned from my mentor, I had to learn all over again, but in a virtual way. However, I would say that I don't sweat the small stuff as much anymore and have become a flexible teacher.”</p> <p>“I have started to really stop and assess what my students need. I take time to look at their work, see what I need to reteach, and I base my instruction on what the students need. I would say my teaching has evolved by being more organized and prepared.”</p> <p>“I believe that I have been better about creating boundaries within my personal and teaching life. I still think that I have a lot of work today because I am constantly working and have yet to find a work life balance. This was influenced by my mental health decline throughout teaching.”</p> <p>“I started teaching in 2019, so the pandemic disrupted my first year of teaching. I feel like I evolved tremendously in terms of classroom teaching in the first 6 months that I taught in person. I then feel like my planning and assessments are much more intentional during this second year, but teaching virtually and now hybrid has left me a</p>

<p>unfortunately, as the burden of an administration that appeared so clearly out to get me increased.”</p> <p>“Learning how to teach virtually, learning how to keep in contact with the students and families during a pandemic, tech issues, starting off in elementary and currently teaching high school.”</p> <p>“The biggest change that I have noticed has been classroom management. At the start of my first year, I really did not have much management and was unsure of what to do at times. However, thanks to my amazing and supportive staff, I feel that I can control any classroom that I am placed into.”</p> <p>“At the beginning of the year, I envisioned this school year to be nearly impossible with the COVID regulations in place. I quickly learned that a classroom is not successful depending upon exterior issues, but rather how the environment in the classroom is maintained during the day. Instead of focusing on the curriculum map, I had to pace my lessons to fit the needs of my students who started the year off almost a whole grade level behind. I went from planning my day around the checklists and curriculum map to focusing on short term goals, differentiation, and overall wellbeing of my learners.”</p> <p>“Trial and error is the biggest help in evolving in my new role as a teacher. The best teacher is experience.”</p>	<p>little frazzled in terms of being able to accurately evaluate my evolution as a teacher.”</p> <p>“I realize that when I went through school i spent most of the time memorizing answers and not really understanding what I was being taught and how it can be applied or it be relevant to my life.”</p> <p>“Well, we have gone from in person to virtual. I use technology more and incorporate OneNote.”</p> <p>“I am better at understanding where students are coming from, setting and communicating the right expectations, and I have less judgement and more openness.”</p> <p>“My teaching has evolved and is more routine based now, this was influenced to make the class procedures run smoother.”</p> <p>“My teaching has evolved to better anticipate possible student responses and questions, which has better equipped me to respond appropriately.”</p> <p>“I believe my teaching has evolved to be more dynamic and it involves the students doing a lot more than just listening to me. This was influenced by feedback from my mentor as well as my administration. I have also evolved to a slower style of teaching that really makes sure the students get a material before moving on. This came about as a result of the changes in the learning environment and also because my course does not have any</p>
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<p>“I have become more confident. I think just experience is influencing this change.”</p> <p>“My lessons are more structured and more productive. An influence for these changes are resources my mentor and coworkers have shared with me.”</p> <p>“My teaching evolved pretty drastically from my first to second year but that was because of transitioning to virtual. Otherwise, I haven’t and wouldn’t change much.”</p>	<p>state or national tests that the students need to prepare for.”</p>
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For this standard, themes relating to professional self-improvement and increasing student learning outcomes were analyzed. All but one response provided by participants expressed some sort of self-improvement or a better understanding of how their teaching practices can improve student learning. One participant whose mentor did not have National Board Certification noted that they were better at setting work and life boundaries and did not relate their response to themes in standard four. Aside from this, no differences between the two groups were observed in relation to standard four. Participants noted the transformational impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on their practices, noted improvement in their behavioral management strategies, honed instructional strategies, and expressed increasing confidence in their overall teaching skills.

Regarding the fifth core proposition, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards shares:

Accomplished teachers reach beyond the boundaries of their individual classrooms to engage wider communities of learning. They connect with local, state, national, and global groups in person or via technology to take advantage of a broad range of professional knowledge and expertise. Accomplished educators draw on those resources when instructing their students and participating in duties that contribute significantly to the quality of schools and student learning. (p.35)

Table 4.8 *Standard Five Results*

Mentor With Certification	Mentor Without Certification
<p>“I do and my role is to be a role model.”</p> <p>“Yes, I feel like I have a role in that community.”</p> <p>“Some of the professional developments I have attended have been beneficial but as for as being part of a learning community, I do not feel I am part of one. The other teachers who teach the same course at me, do not plan with me to make it more beneficial to our students.”</p> <p>“During my first year, when I would plan and discuss lessons with my Social Studies team, I typically did feel that sense of community. During much of my second year, however, I was unfortunately forced by administration to plan lessons so far in advance that I could no longer work with my team on them. I would occasionally discuss lesson plans with my mentor, department head, or social studies team teachers, but that became relatively rare. Originally I felt like I did have a strong role as a team member, but that</p>	<p>“I feel like I have a place in my school/department as the new learner, but I do not feel like I have a place in the group of new teachers. I am the only first year teacher at my school and due to COVID I have not been able to meet any of the other first year teachers so I do not feel that this is a cohesive group.”</p> <p>“I do feel that I am a part of a learning community and I feel as though I serve as the foundation for the learning community.”</p> <p>“Absolutely, I feel like I have a big part in the learning community. My mentors and coworkers make me feel that way every day. I work with a fantastic team for educators.”</p> <p>“Yes, I do. I feel over my head, but still included in conversations and decisions.”</p> <p>“Yes I do. I feel like my role is that of relationship building and connecting</p>

<p>was significantly diminished as time went on.”</p> <p>Absolutely! I feel like the students don't want to disappoint and if you show them that you are going to hold them accountable they are more likely to be successful.</p> <p>“Absolutely. My school has been incredible thus far. It's inviting and friendly for both students and staff. With the great environment, it makes it a lot easier for students to learn.”</p> <p>“I feel like I am a part of a learning community because I am surrounded by teachers who have had years of experience and are always eager to lend a helping hand. Being a first year teacher, this has been a great opportunity to learn from teachers who have seen education evolve over the years in their own classroom. This has also given me the opportunity to share my technology skills with teachers who were unfamiliar with the programs used for distanced learning.”</p> <p>“I am always learning. I watch what veteran teachers do, and on the flip side I notice that they watch what I do as well. I believe we are all continuously learning from each other.”</p> <p>“Yes I do feel that I am a part of the learning community. I learn from my fellow teachers in my team, in my school, in my county, in my content area. “</p>	<p>within both my team and with our students.”</p> <p>“Not really, no.”</p> <p>“Yes, very much so. I do, many of my students have gone on to be productive members of society.”</p> <p>“Yes, and yes”</p> <p>“Within my classroom I created a better one each year. Within the school as a whole, I generally felt stressed, unsupported and an outsider.”</p> <p>“Yes I do feel I am a part of a learning community, and I feel I have a role of responsibility as it is my job to teach material to students</p> <p>“I feel that I am *part* of the learning community, but that I don't play much of a role in it.”</p>
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<p>“Yes. In ALS there is a special community where teachers and paraeducators are all contributing to students learning by working and collaborating together.”</p> <p>“I feel a part of the community I am within, however I do not always think of it as a learning community. I know that is the purpose of the community and I do push myself to continue to learn and progress, however, often I feel that our professional development could be used in better more efficient ways. I don’t feel that I have a role in my professional learning community.”</p>	
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To analyze participants’ responses to questions addressing standard five, themes of belonging, professional development, and their levels of engagement within learning community were examined. For mentees whose mentor had National Board Certification, most responses shared they did feel that they belonged to a professional learning community. Two participants shared they did not feel a part of a learning community. Aside from most participants agreeing they felt part of a learning community, the results were mixed for themes of development and satisfaction. Only two responses shared themes of positive feelings towards professional development within a learning community. These responses shared, “this has also given me the opportunity to share my technology skills with teachers who were unfamiliar with the programs used for distanced learning” and “I learn from my fellow teachers in my team, in my school, in my county, in my content area.” One teacher shared that professional development was a lacking

element in their community by sharing, “I often I feel that our professional development could be used in better more efficient ways.”

Several members who had a mentor with National Board Certification expressed that they did not feel they had a role in their learning communities. Some of these comments shared, “some of the professional developments I have attended have been beneficial but as far as being part of a learning community, I do not feel I am part of one,” - “I don’t feel that I have a role in my professional learning community,” - and “originally I felt like I did have a strong role as a team member, but that was significantly diminished as time went on.” These themes of being an “outsider” do not align with standard five and do not match Gee’s vision of what it takes to belong to a Discourse. Belonging to a discourse requires the member to feel that they belong with their skills, attitudes, and views (Gee, 1989).

Participants whose mentor did not have National Board Certification shared similar themes in their responses. There was a mix of responses sharing positive and negative feelings of belonging, their benefits from professional development, and their engagement in their professional learning communities. Some descriptive positive responses include “I do feel that I am a part of a learning community and I feel as though I serve as the foundation for the learning community” and “absolutely, I feel like I have a big part in the learning community. My mentors and coworkers make me feel that way every day. I work with a fantastic team for educators.” Some negative comments shared they felt like an “outsider” and another mentioned that COVID-19 has had a negative influence on how they connect with a professional learning community. No difference in attitudes relating to standard five were observed between the two groups.

#### 4.6 Research Question 2: Themes Relating to Teacher Retention

Research Question 2: Do mentees whose mentor earned National Board Certification express more confidence in remaining in the profession beyond two years compared to a mentee who did not have a mentor with National Board Certification?

While this question involved data that is quantitative, qualitative themes of confidence related to staying within the profession were examined. These questions addressed themes by asking about attitudes regarding their own practice and their mentor.

Table 4.9 *Attitudes of Remaining in the Field and Mentees' Perception of Mentors*

Question (1-7) Likert scale 7 = Strongly Agree 1 = Strongly Disagree	Mentees whose mentor earned National Board Certification (average rating)	Mentees whose mentor did not have National Board Certification (average rating)
How fulfilling has your teaching experience been in your first 1-2 years?	5.36	4.73
What is the likelihood of you teaching three or more years?	5.64	4.27
Would you agree or disagree that your mentor helped you develop a positive opinion of teaching as a career?	6	6
Do you feel your mentor demonstrated a commitment to excellence in education?	6.45	6
Do feel that your mentor taught you skills that you will be able to use for a career of teaching?	6	5.82

Teachers who had a mentor with National Board Certification shared similar feelings about their mentors' influence on their view of the profession compared to those whose mentor who did not have the certification. There was no difference in perceived themes relating to skills mentors taught to mentees and how the mentees felt their mentor helped them develop a positive opinion of teaching as a career. Perceptions of mentors demonstrating a commitment to education were slightly more agreeable to those with a mentor possessing National Board Certification. Notably, mentees mentored with someone possessing the National Board Certificate were more agreeable that their teaching experience in their first two years was very fulfilling. These mentees also expressed more agreement that they could see themselves teaching more than three years compared to mentees not mentored by a mentor with the certificate.

#### **4.7 Summary**

This study compared the professional Discourses of new teachers with regard to their mentors' professional certification as a National Board Certified Teacher. In relation to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' five core propositions, it was found that no difference in professional Discourses was observable from the data participants provided when cross-referenced with the Five Core Propositions provided by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The skills expected to be acquired by the mentee from the National Board Certified teacher (the more knowledgeable other through scaffolding) were not demonstrated in any consistent observable manner from the responses compared to the control group. Also, participants' perception of their mentor contributing to their positive perception of the profession and remaining in the profession was the same between the two groups. Participants with

mentor processing National Board Certification did express slightly more agreeable attitudes towards remaining in the profession for three or more years, describing their teaching experience so far as fulfilling, and sharing their mentor demonstrated a commitment to excellence in education. Other than these slight variations of agreement, mentees from both groups demonstrated similar skills and attitudes regarding their own teaching practice and their perception of their mentors.

The data does demonstrate some alignment from both groups with requirements college preparation programs require to become a teacher in Maryland. Maryland has recently required all new teachers to undergo the EdTPA process to earn teacher certification. The EdTPA provides that effective teachers develop skills in planning, instructing, assessing, and reflecting (Making Good Choices, 2019). This aligns with all five core propositions required to earn National Board Certification.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to investigate a proposed teacher mentoring program designed to improve teacher effectiveness and retention in Maryland. This program shares that mentors will be effective leaders known as “Master Teachers” and will be leaders of teachers. Specifically, they will be the mentors for attracting, developing, and retaining new teachers. These “Master Teachers” must possess a current National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certificate (Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, 2019). The researcher designed an action research study utilizing qualitative methods to analyze themes relating to the five National Board for Professional Teaching Standards’ five core propositions. Themes relating to teacher retention and personal fulfillment of teaching were also analyzed. This chapter will discuss conclusions, recommendations for future research, and suggestions for improving mentoring programs for new teachers in Maryland.

### **5.2 Problem of Practice**

Maryland is experiencing issues recruiting and retaining new teachers. In 2015, Maryland hired 68% of new teachers from other states (Janulis, 2017). Maryland also loses 47% of new teachers by their third year of teaching (Kirwan & Hise, 2020). Problems recruiting and retaining teachers leads to the creation lower standards for becoming a teacher by not requiring content-specific degrees to earn teacher certification.

This can decrease the preparedness and quality of teachers in the classroom (García & Weiss, 2019b). The problem of teachers leaving the profession is accelerating (Gray & Taie, 2015). The overall teacher retention problem disproportionately affects high-poverty schools more than other areas (García & Weiss, 2019b). However, all public-school districts in Maryland have reported having a teacher shortage in at least one content area (Janulis, 2017).

### **5.3 Research Questions**

Two research questions guided this qualitative study:

- 1) Do mentees who had a mentor with National Board Certification describe their own teaching habits that are more aligned with the five core propositions of National Board Certification compared to a mentee whose mentor did not have the certification?
- 2) Do mentees whose mentor earned National Board Certification express more confidence in remaining in the profession beyond two years compared to a mentee who did not have a mentor with National Board Certification?

### **5.4 Purpose of this study**

The purpose of this study was to review a teacher retention program as proposed by the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence. This program would create a new career path for teachers to become leaders and mentors for fellow teachers (Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, 2019). In order to become a mentor or leader, teachers would need to earn National Board Certification in their content areas. Understanding the acquisition of skills and attitudes (Discourses) from the mentor as the “more knowledgeable other” to the mentee helps generate an understanding of how effective having a mentor with National Board Certification may be for a mentee.

Since Maryland views mentors with National Board Certification to be the leaders of new teachers, it is worthwhile to investigate how or if mentees utilize components from the certification's five core propositions in their own professional practice.

### **5.5 Summary of Major Results and Findings**

This study found that there was no difference in the themes that participants demonstrated when analyzing for themes contained in the five core propositions of the National Board Certification. Participants described their professional practices in a similar manner regardless of their mentors' status as a National Board Certified teacher. Thus, the framework for the more knowledgeable other (the mentor with certification) to scaffold Discourses related to the five core propositions did not result in the mentee demonstrating attitudes any different than the mentee with a mentor not having the certification. This study did find the mentees with NBC mentors were slightly more likely to agree that they could see themselves teaching beyond more than three years. It also found that these mentees mentored by a teacher with the certification were slightly more agreeable to share that their teaching experience so far has been fulfilling.

While there was no difference in the themes participants demonstrated, all participants demonstrated that they are doing okay with their teaching practices at a minimum. They did not demonstrate that they were struggling. Somewhere along in their teacher development, they learned to speak, act, and think in order to belong to a professional teaching Discourse. Their professional experience, while short, has allowed them to acquire parts of their "identity kit" that Gee (2015a) describes. Maryland sets standards for what is expected of teachers to learn and also expects students to practice their skills authentically during student teaching. This process involves learning and

acquiring skills. Gee shares that while learning is being conscious of what is being taught, belonging to a discourse requires acquisition through authentic interactions with those within the discourse. Teachers learn in their teacher preparation programs the knowledge they need to teach. They acquire skills and information through authentic practice and socialization. With the hybridization of learning and acquisition, participants were able to demonstrate their belongingness to a Discourse that is a professional teaching practice.

### **5.6 Results as they Relate to Existing Literature**

Little existing research is available regarding utilizing National Board Certified Teachers as mentors for new teachers. As Zhu, Gnedko-Berry, Borman, and Manzeske (2019) share, “although NBCTs have the qualities associated with teacher leadership and are employed in school districts in instructional leadership roles, no causal studies have examined the effectiveness of NBCTs as instructional leaders” (p.3). Zhu, Gnedko-Berry, Borman, and Manzeske also note this lack of research as a gap in the literature. However, there are some connections to be made to existing literature for the first research question. Regarding the second research question, the researcher of the current study found no existing research directly investigating the role that National Board Certified teachers may have on mentees’ perceptions of professional fulfillment or thoughts of remaining in the field of education.

The current study found that mentees mentored by National Board Certified Teachers do not describe their professional practices related to the five core propositions of the certification any differently than mentees mentored by someone without the certification. The themes shared by participants were similar in nature when reflecting upon their experience with their mentors. These findings are similar to the findings

discussed by Zhu, Gnedko-Berry, Borman, and Manzeske (2019). Their study found no statistical significance in the areas of emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support when analyzing the effects of National Board Certificated Teachers as mentors for novice teachers. However, the authors did note small effect sizes for emotional support, (0.28) classroom organization, (.28) and instructional support (.06) for those mentors mentored with someone with the certification.

One of the research questions investigated in Belson and Husted's 2015 study analyzed the "spillover" effect of National Board Certified Teachers that may have influence on other teachers. This specifically investigated the fifth core proposition of National Board Certification where teachers are active participants in their learning communities. Their study shared that teachers with the certification were more likely to lead and support other teachers indirectly improving student learning outcomes. The current study did not find that mentees with a mentor possessing National Board Certification were any more likely to share their professional practices and Discourses in any different manner than a mentee whose mentor did not have the certification.

In the current study, mentees described their mentors in a positive manner regardless of their National Board Certification status. Research from Sowell (2017) shares that forming a relationship built on trust is one of the most important traits a mentoring experience can have. Sowell also shares that fostering confidence in a mentees' classroom practices can improve their classroom management. The current study found that both groups of mentees described their mentors as supportive, unwavering, and emotionally available to support the mentee. Mentees from both groups also shared their mentors were dedicated to improving their instructional practices.

Snyder (2018) shares that teachers look for leaders who can provide resources and want to form relationships with them. The current study found mentees from both groups described their mentors in a way that demonstrates a positive relationship was formed. Data relating to core proposition one and mentees' agreement that mentors helped mentees develop a positive view of the profession demonstrate a working relationship between mentor and mentee. The data provided from both groups was also in alignment with research from Heikkinen, Wilkinson, Aspfors, and Bristol (2018) sharing that effective mentoring demonstrates themes of opening up, facilitating, counseling, guiding, and leading. From the data the current study provides, both groups of mentees had positive and meaningful relationships with their mentors that helped mentees develop a positive view of the profession.

### **5.7 Recommendations for Future Practice**

The five core propositions from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards detail what is expected of an effective content teacher. Only the fifth standard, which shares that teachers are members of learning communities, addresses anything close to mentoring (2016). However, the fifth core proposition and the certification itself is not designed for creating effective mentors. There is no training on how to become an effective mentor through the National Board Certification process.

#### **Recommendation One: Mentoring Certification.**

New teachers are able to observe practices from experienced teachers and replicate those professional behaviors (Waston, 2013). When assigning a mentor to model and assist in the development of these professional behaviors, the skills of the mentor need to be considered. Mentors have the capacity to instill attitudes and foster

growth in new teachers (Dziczkowski, 2013). Requiring mentors to have National Board Certification does not automatically mean that the mentor will be effective or that non-NBC teachers will not be effective. The Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence (2019) deems teachers with National Board Certification as the best to lead new teachers and demonstrate professional teaching practices. These teachers are at the top echelon of the teaching profession with this consideration regarding their skills and talents. Consider that in sports, some of the most talented athletes are not always the best coaches and that some of the best coaches have little experience playing professional sports. It is not always the case that those capable of practicing great skills can teach others to do the same. While Watson (2013) shares that teachers can replicate modeled behaviors through observation using social learning theory, Watson makes no consideration on how a mentor may coach a mentee to improve these behaviors. There is more than observation occurring in the development of a new teacher.

Much is left unsaid of how teachers are going to acquire Discourses expected for acceptable professional practices. The Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence does not explain how “Master Teachers,” the mentors, will be acting to support new teachers. Using Gee’s (2011a) discourse theory, teacher preparation programs may outline what will be learned but do not explicitly help one acquire behaviors that allow them to belong to a professional Discourse. It is assumed that these behaviors are somehow adopted over the course of a new teacher’s development in Maryland. However, mentoring is an active practice that requires reflection and development from both the mentor and the mentee (Langdon, 2017). Focusing on the skills, attitudes, and behaviors of the mentors may yield higher quality mentors that could

lead to new teachers acquiring better dispositions and belonging to the professional teaching Discourse. In doing so, new teachers are better set to speak, think, and behave in a manner that will help them act as effective teachers. This could possibly make for a better entry into the profession, a more positive experience by teaching and acting effectively, that may help retain new teachers.

Maryland public school teachers must earn six continuing professional development (CPD) credits every five years to maintain their certification (Montgomery County Public Schools, 2018). The topics for CPD credits are very broad and accepted by the state as long as the course is accredited by the Maryland Department of Education. Three current topics provided for CPD credits include Using Digital Tools to Foster Student Learning, An Introduction to Underlying Principles and Research for Effective Literacy Instruction, and Teaching Students in Blended Classrooms (MSDE CPD Credits, n.d.). It would be possible to create an add-on mentoring certificate to teachers' teaching certificates recognized by the state that would grant teachers the ability to be lead teachers, master teachers, or professor master teachers that is tied to earning CPD credits. It recommended that this mentoring certification teach and assess knowledge of effective mentoring practices. In offering this alternative path to becoming a teacher leader, more effective mentors may be tempted to earn the mentoring certificate since the National Board Certification process is much longer and costlier. Doing so also motivates more teachers to explore their talents as a leader. Not only can teachers earn the certificate, but they also can be motivated to do so in order to keep their existing teaching certificate.

Maryland already recognizes the value of add-on certificates. For example, in order to become an administrator, existing teachers can take an 18-credit add-on

certification in administration that included an internship as long as they have a related Master's degree. By creating a new mentor certificate, the Maryland Department of Education can utilize research that directly utilizes research on creating effective mentors rather than relying on a certification that effectively shares qualified mentoring is a byproduct of the goals of the certification. There is no justification from the National Board for Professional Teaching standards that their certification directly creates effective mentors.

**Recommendation Two: Removing or adjusting the role National Board Certification.**

Research from Zhu, Gnedko-Berry, Borman, and Manzeske (2019) casts doubt on the explicit value National Board Certified teachers may have as mentors on their mentees. The certification also has questionable influence on student learning outcomes (Houston & Kulinna, 2019; Rouse 2008). Some teachers share that they need financial assistance to earn the certification and cite the workload of earning the certification as the biggest barrier in their decision-making process to pursue the certification (Wilson, 2020). Thus, it is recommended that the National Board Certification be removed as a requirement for earning "Master Teacher" status. It is possible that earning the certification serves as a barrier for effective mentors who want to participate in a leadership capacity. Having a requirement to earn National Board Certification constrains the definition of leader or mentor. In the eyes of the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, a professional with a graduate degree in leadership is not as qualified as someone with National Board Certification to serve as a leader. If the commission is set on keeping the certification as a marker of a leader, it is recommended that the proposed

career ladder (see figure 1.1) be amended to share that “Master Teachers” be advised by “National Board Certified Teacher Advisors” on a frequency deemed suitable by the commission in order to maintain “Master Teacher” status. The new criteria for earning “Master Teacher” status would be set from recommendations in recommendation one. Doing so recognizes the commission’s previous ambitions of having a gold standard (National Board Certification) for teacher leaders as an influence on teacher leaders. However, it refocuses the goals of being a “Master Teacher” to reflect leadership skills.

### **5.8 Implementation Plan**

While this study cannot conclude that National Board Certificated mentors are not more effective mentors than existing mentors without the certification, it at least calls the question of how the certification leads to more effective mentoring outcomes. The current study shares information that should be considered by the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence with related research to review the goals of having “Master Teachers” along with the requirements to earn the title. Existing explanations of the role of Master teachers contained in the interim report (Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence, 2019) and the January 2020 overview (Kirwan & Hise) are vague and do not provide a complete justification for mentors needing to have National Board Certification. As Maryland proceeds with “Kirwan 2.0” (an informal title for the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence) to address concerns raised due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be wise to take time to refine elements originally recommended by the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence (Shwe, 2021). The Commission should take this time and clearly share how they expect National Board

Certified teachers to act as leaders of teachers and make adjustments to the proposed career ladder as they see fit.

## **5.9 Limitations and Suggestions**

This study is limited by two factors. First, the study utilized feedback from 22 participants. Considering a small sample size and the tools utilized for data collection, this study cannot conclude that teachers with National Board Certification are or are not more effective mentors than those mentors without the certification. The current study seeks to provide information for future considerations and research. This study may be considered a pilot study in that it provides an investigation and guidance that may be considered for designing a larger hypothesis-testing study (Kraemer & Blasey, 2015).

The second limitation of this study is the lack of available research to compare and contrast findings. In the few research studies that examine connections between National Board Certified teachers and their mentors, it is noted that there is very little research on how Board Certified teachers play a role as leaders or mentors (Zhu, Gnedko-Berry, Borman, & Manzeske, 2019; Belson & Husted, 2015). These studies also have their own limitations and share it is difficult to explicitly explain the value a National Board Certified teacher may have as a mentor over someone else without the certification.

Relating to the current study, the study could have been expanded to include more participants that would increase the amount of data for analysis and improve explaining power. Given time constraints, only a month for soliciting participants was available. Extending this time window would have likely yielded more participants. Also, the wording of questions on the data collection tool could have been modified slightly to

better target participant's analyzation of their mentors' behaviors as they relate to the five core propositions of National Board Certification. For example, questions could have been formatted "Do you recall when your mentor demonstrated..." or "What things did your mentor do that you felt that emulates..." to better evaluate how mentees examined their mentors' professional practices.

### **5.10 Recommendations for Future Research**

It is recommended that future research examine the Discourses mentees demonstrate after having a mentor with National Board Certification on a large scale that may be able to examine significance. This research should also analyze other factors that may help a mentee acquire components of the five core propositions or other standards that define effective teaching practices. Other areas of research should continue to analyze the role National Board Certification has on student learning outcomes outside of reading and math content areas. Existing research that is used to demonstrate the value of National Board Certification is typically centered on subjects in reading, math, and the sciences (Elevating Teaching, Empowering Teachers, n.d.) while some research questions the value in other subjects that are typically not assessed using standardized tests (Houston & Kulinna 2019). It is recommended that more research continue to investigate the value of the certification in and out of typically assessed content areas.

### **5.11 Summary**

This action research study shared that Discourses related to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' five core propositions were no likely to be acquired by mentees mentored by National Board Certified Teachers than those whose mentor did not have the certification. This study also found that mentees mentored by a mentor with the

certification were slightly more agreeable that they will teach three or more years than someone mentored without the certification. The effects of having a National Board Certified teacher as a gold standard for acting as a mentor or leader needs further research. Teacher attrition rates in the United States continue to be a concern as staffing problems are compounded by fewer individuals choosing education as a college major. Mindful mentoring strategies and initiatives may help develop and retain quality teachers from leaving the profession.

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## APPENDIX A: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

I've invited you to fill out a form:

### Invitation to Participate

Greetings,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a study that analyzes how new teachers feel about their teaching practices after being mentored during their first 1-2 years.

Discussions regarding mentoring early-career teachers have been gaining traction at the state level across the country. In my studies at the University of South Carolina, I have been interested in teacher perspectives, particularly teachers like you who have had personal experiences with mentoring at the beginning of your career.

Principal researcher - Joshua McGoun ([jmcgoun@email.sc.edu](mailto:jmcgoun@email.sc.edu))

Supervisor - Dr. Todd Lilly ([lillyt98@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:lillyt98@mailbox.sc.edu))

You have been invited to complete a survey for the fulfillment of a Doctorate Degree dissertation in Curriculum and Instruction. This survey form will take 15-20 minutes to complete.

As a reminder, the responses that you provide are confidential. This means I will not share your participation and answers in this study with anyone else. When analyzing and presenting your responses as research, your responses will be anonymous. This means any responses presented as research cannot be traced back to you. The personal identification key created cannot be used to identify you when presenting your responses as research.

By submitting this form, you consent to participate in this research study. If at any time you wish to withdraw from this study, please contact the principal researcher at [jmcgoun@email.sc.edu](mailto:jmcgoun@email.sc.edu) or 412-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\*

Thank you so much for contributing to my research and our profession!

**What is your name?**

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

- ☐ Less than one full year
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2

- ☐ 3+

**What subject(s) or grade level(s) do you teach?**

**What school district(s) do you teach in?**

**Think of who was your mentor. This might have been someone assigned to you by a principal, school district, or team leader. Did your mentor hold a National Board Certification in the area that you were mentored?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**Create a four-digit personal identification key with one letter. This key is used by the researcher to analyze your responses without knowing who you are. So, the key will be five characters total. Please remember this personal identification key for the second form that was provided to you. What is your self-created personal identification key?**

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

## APPENDIX B: SURVEY TOOL

I've invited you to fill out a form:

### Teacher Reflection Survey

Greetings,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a study that analyzes how new teachers feel about their teaching practices after being mentored during their first 1-2 years.

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Thank you so much for contributing to my research and our profession!

### Note

Please provide your honest feelings regarding your teaching abilities. Again, your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. Responses beyond a yes or no would be greatly appreciated. Try to comprehensively describe how you feel.

**What is the personal identification key that you created on the first form?**

**What would be an adjective that you would use to describe your commitment to your students and their learning? Please provide a short response to support your choice.**

**What might be an adjective to describe your perception of your mentor's commitment to students and their learning? Please describe why you chose that adjective.**

**How do you think your students best learn? What conditions make for the best learning classroom? What strategy did you learn from your mentor that you frequently use now?**

**What have you found to be the most authentic way to assess students' learning? How did you first learn about this? Did your mentor have any influence on how you assess your students?**

**Do you feel that you are a part of a learning community? If so, do you feel that you have a role in that community?**

**In what ways has your teaching evolved since you started teaching and what has influenced these changes?**

**How fulfilling has your teaching experience been in your first 1-2 years?**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very Unfulfilling ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Fulfilling

**What is the likelihood of you teaching three or more years?**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very Unlikely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Likely

**Would you agree or disagree that your mentor helped you develop a positive opinion of teaching as a career?**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

**Do you feel your mentor demonstrated a commitment to excellence in education?**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

---

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

---

**Do feel that your mentor taught you skills that you will be able to use for a career of teaching?**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

---

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

---

**Would you be willing to share more information about these questions if I contact you?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

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