

THE EFFECTS OF A SCHOOL-BASED MENTORING PROGRAM ON BEGINNING
TEACHER RETENTION RATE

by

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(Under Direction the of Dr. Sally J. Zepeda)

ABSTRACT

The study examined how a systematic program of school-based mentoring activities affected beginning teacher retention in one school system. The study sought to investigate whether there was a difference between the total number of hours beginning teachers participated in a school-based mentoring program and their retention in the school district, as well as how the specific activities shared in the mentor/protégé relationship impacted retention. Data were collected and analyzed using a survey instrument, the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey, created by the researcher from the literature review on mentoring beginning teachers. The study population included teachers with less than three years of experience ($N = 230$) who began work in a Georgia school district in the 2001-2002 or 2002-2003 school years. One hundred and sixty-two surveys were returned for analysis for a return rate of 70.4%. The findings of the study provided evidence of the positive impact of mentoring on beginning teacher retention especially for beginning-year teachers who engaged in activities that spanned between one and three hours per week. Additional study is needed to determine the impact of a formalized mentoring program (e.g., portfolio completion) on teacher retention, as well as the implication of the success of a mentoring program on the capacity and training of the school-based mentor.

INDEX WORDS: teacher attrition, mentoring and induction, beginning teacher retention, mentoring programs, school-wide based mentoring, system-wide mentor training, evaluation of mentoring and induction

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, including my husband, Altos, for giving me the space and encouragement to achieve my goals and dreams; to my mother, for always encouraging me to raise the bar and to be confident in all my endeavors; to my father, for instilling in me the love of adventure and this has been quite an adventure; and to my brother, for providing me with the sense of wonder and reminding me that life is meant to be enjoyed. I also couldn't have completed this work without the support of other family members who have given me constant support and encouragement throughout this process. I also dedicate this to my cohort graduate friends, who pause at every meeting, to ask about my progress and to encourage me to continue on. They say that all the effort is worth it in the end, and I'm beginning to see that joy, finally!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A crisis confronts the teaching profession—that of hiring newly trained teachers and retaining them within the professional ranks (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Odell, 1990; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). Projected estimates suggested that about 30% of beginning teachers do not teach beyond 2 years and between 40 and 50%, often including the most academically talented, leave the profession within their first 5 years of teaching (National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future, 2002; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Thomas & Kiley, 1994). Feistritzer (1990), compiling data for the National Center for Educational Information, indicated that the attrition rate for beginning teachers is approximately twice that of experienced teachers. Moreover, teacher attrition in urban districts is higher than in non-urban districts (Dunne, Nave, & Lewis, 2000).

New teachers’ experiences during their induction year often determine the future direction of their careers. Murnane, Singer, Williett, Kimple, and Olsen (1991) noted that “teachers are most likely to leave the profession during their early years in the classroom, the first year being the most risky. Teachers who survive the early period are likely to continue to teach for many more years” (pp. 59-60).

A number of factors have been identified that contribute to the beginning teacher retention problem: population shifts in a highly mobile society, career opportunities for groups historically confined to careers in education, lack of support, and an increase in challenging situations for beginning teachers, among others (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Feiman-Nemser

2003; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). Policy makers have often responded to the problem by simply trying to increase the supply of teachers. Georgia, facing a teacher shortage in general, has implemented several steps to recruit more teachers for hard-to-fill positions. In 2001, Georgia launched the Teacher Alternative Preparation Program (TAPP) for individuals with a Bachelor's Degree interested in becoming teachers but who did not go through the teacher-certification process. In addition to the TAPP Program, Georgia also proposed a program to provide funding for a cost-free education to students who prepare to go into teaching. These recruitment efforts are worthwhile, but, unfortunately, will not solve the teacher shortages that schools face (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). According to Ingersoll and Smith, the data on new teacher attrition suggested that efforts to recruit more teachers would not, by themselves, solve the shortage of qualified teachers currently plaguing schools. Their research showed that increasing support from current school personnel, including administrators and mentors, was crucial to retaining novice teachers.

To address the need for building supportive relationships between a beginning teacher and a more experienced one, educational reformers have created professional development models in which experienced teachers share their expertise with beginning teachers (Sargent, 2003). Sargent described the idea of an experienced teacher guiding and supporting a beginning teacher as a popular professional development model. During the beginners first year of teaching, a more experienced teacher guides, counsels, coaches, and becomes a role model for the beginner. The guiding, counseling, and coaching of a beginning teacher is a model of mentoring that many reformers have attributed to increased retention rates (Black, 2001; Holloway, 2001; Moir & Barron, 2002).

Convinced that the problems confronted by beginning teachers can be overcome by the support and assistance of a mentor, numerous legislative initiatives have been created that require assistance for beginning teachers. In 2001, a total of 28 states reported that they had some form of beginning teacher assistance program, but only 10 states requiring mentoring support their initiatives with funding (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2002).

In Georgia, the State Board of Education provides funding that pays stipends to mentors who document hours spent in support of a beginning teacher. Teachers who are eligible for these funds must first undergo extensive training leading to a certification of endorsement as a Teacher Support Specialist (TSS). As a TSS applicant, teachers must complete a packet of information that gathers evidence about the teacher's expertise in classroom methods and strategies. Once accepted into the TSS program, candidates complete a 100-hour course. The TSS course consists of 50 hours of instruction on various aspects of teaching and coaching and 50 hours of a school-based mentoring internship. Once a teacher successfully completes the 100-hour program, he or she is considered fully endorsed as a Teacher Support Specialist by the Georgia State Department of Education and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Once certified, TSS teachers may then begin their mentoring role by spending time during the school day supporting, guiding, coaching, and counseling beginning teachers.

The literature on the effects of mentoring on first year teacher attrition is replete with examples of success, and the benefits of mentoring partnerships have been validated in numerous studies (Black, 2001; Holloway, 2001; Jones, 1997; Linik, 2001; Slater, 1997). The research on the success of mentoring and the longevity of beginning teachers have been documented in studies that have followed beginners from one to three years (Garmston & Bartell, 1991; Jones, 1997). For instance, the Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL) evaluation showed that with

the addition of mentoring teams, at the end of 3 years, an average of 95% of beginning teachers in the program were still teaching (Garmston & Bartell, 1991). A South Carolina study of 400 beginning teachers found that over 90% of those who received mentoring for at least one year planned to remain in the profession (Jones, 1997). Linik (2001) in exploring the impact of an award-winning mentoring program in Walla Walla (Washington) found that the program had boosted the new teacher retention rate to 93%. These studies demonstrate the positive effects of the impact of mentoring on the reversal of the high percentages of beginning teachers who traditionally leave the profession following their first year and warrants further examination.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher turnover is expensive (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2002). Every year thousands of qualified teachers are recruited into the profession only to quit a year or two later. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future reported that in 1999–2000 schools across the nation hired 534,861 teachers, but by the end of the year, 539,778 had left the classroom. With first year teacher turnover at 15% and as much as 40% in the first three years, the turnover of first year teachers presents the greatest concern (Bolich, 2001; Linik, 2001; Sargent, 2003). Gone is more than a much-needed teacher. According to data collected on induction programs by Wong and Asquith (2002), every teacher who leaves within 3 years costs taxpayers an estimated \$75,000 (based on an industry standard of calculating 2.5 times the employee's initial salary in recruitment, personnel expenditures, and lost productivity). A recent study in Texas revealed that the state's annual turnover rate costs around \$329 million a year [Texas State Board for Educator Certification (TSBEC), 2000]. This turnover rate not only impacts the state budget but also creates a view of teaching as a "revolving door" profession (TSBEC, 2000).

Teacher turnover also impacts efforts to ensure a cadre of high quality teachers in our nations classrooms. This consequence of teacher turnover is the most serious because it impacts teaching quality and student achievement (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). Inexperienced teachers are noticeably less effective than senior teachers (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1999; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). After one year with an inexperienced teacher, students can experience a reduction in academic performance that can be as much as 35-40% (Marzano et al., 2001). The data, according to Marzano et al. on student academic performance, create an additional purpose for the emphasis on retaining beginning teachers and why it is important to examine mentoring as one way to increase the retention of beginning teachers.

Research has indicated that beginning teachers who were mentored were more effective teachers in their early years, since they learned from guided practice rather than by trial-and-error (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Huling-Austin (1990) found in research on mentoring beginning teachers, that those who were mentored showed more competency and motivation than teachers without mentors. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996), mentored novice teachers were reported to focus on student learning sooner as well as leave at a lower rate than their un-mentored counterparts.

This study examined how a systematic program of mentoring activities affected beginning teacher retention. The primary research question of this study was, therefore: Is there a relationship between the total number of hours beginning teachers participate in a school-based mentoring program and their retention in the system? To determine the effectiveness of specific mentoring activities related to retention, there was a secondary research question: Is there a

relationship between the number of hours beginning teachers participate in a specific mentoring activity and their retention?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine school-based mentoring programs across 40 schools in a middle Georgia school district to determine the difference these programs would make in the improvement of beginning teacher retention. The study also explored the factors that impacted beginning teacher retention, specifically those factors related to the perceived lack of support provided by system and school personnel. The study was conducted on P-12 beginning teachers that entered the school district in the 2001-2002 or 2002-2003 school year. The study examined whether there were statistically significant relationships between: (a) beginning teachers who participated in a school-based mentoring program and teacher retention, and (b) the type of mentoring strategy employed and teacher retention.

Research Questions

There were two research questions that provided the direction for this study:

Research Question 1. Is there a relationship between the total number of hours beginning teachers participate in a school-based mentoring program and beginning teacher retention in the system?

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between the total number of hours beginning teachers participate in a school-based mentoring program and beginning teacher retention in the system.

Research Question 2. Is there a relationship between the number of hours beginning teachers participate in a specific mentoring strategy and the retention of beginning teachers in the system?

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between the number of hours beginning teachers participate in a specific mentoring strategy and the retention of beginning teachers in the system.

Significance of the Study

In light of the data on beginning teacher retention and the emphasis on providing assistance through school-based mentoring programs, this study sought to investigate the impact of providing assistance to beginning teachers on their decision to remain as a teacher in the system. At a time when finding qualified teachers to attract to the profession is increasingly difficult and the provisions of the No Child Left Behind legislation to not only hire highly-qualified teachers but also to retain them, research on programs that show evidence of helping to retain the current workforce becomes timely and important. Georgia is a good example of this dynamic. In response to complaints by school districts that colleges were producing too few teachers, then Governor Roy Barnes proposed a cost-free education to students who prepared to go into teaching. Although efforts such as this one would help to put teachers in the classroom, these efforts have not stopped the constant turnover of beginning teachers. According to a Georgia State University researcher, teacher turnover would be the state's greatest education challenge in the coming years (Keep Good Teachers, 2000). It is predicted that Georgia will need to hire 100,000 teachers in the next 10 years. Half of these new hires will be to replace the teachers, primarily those with less than three years experience, who quit.

Georgia, facing a teacher shortage in general, has implemented several steps to recruit more teachers for hard-to-fill positions. In 2001, the state launched the Teacher Alternative Preparation Program (TAPP) for individuals interested in becoming teachers and who had a Bachelor's Degree but who did not go through the teacher-certification process. Once the aspiring teachers receive a job offer, they enroll in summer training that will prepare them to

become a teacher. The TAPP teachers continue to participate in teacher preparation classes during the two-year period they are working toward full certification. The programs instituted in the state of Georgia focused on placing teachers in the classroom will help with the teacher shortage, but the retention of these beginners becomes the next focus.

Several examples can be noted (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Odell & Ferraro, 1992) that prove mentoring is related to improved beginning teacher performance, however, there is still need to document the difference mentors make in improving beginning teacher retention. Little (1990) encouraged future research that focused on comparisons of mentors who received training in preparation for mentoring beginning teachers with those who did not. Odell and Ferraro (1992) found that mentored beginning teachers showed greater competency and motivation than teachers without mentors. However, they challenged future researchers to determine how mentoring affects the retention of teachers in the profession. This gap in the literature has also been noted by Wang and Odell (2002) who have called for more rigorous and quantitative studies.

Chapman (1984) studied teacher retention and documented that the quality of the first teaching experience seemed to be more positively related to teacher retention than beginning teachers' prior academic performance or the adequacy of the teacher preparation programs. If it can be shown that improving the quality of a first year teachers experience through mentoring can increase retention, it is useful to better understand the nature and content of the mentoring experience (Hegler & Dudley, 1986).

This study was designed to investigate the mentoring programs established in a suburban Georgia school district and to determine the effect the mentor/protégé support relationships had on beginning teachers' decisions to remain in the profession. The study documented the amount

of time mentors and beginning teachers spent with one another, as well as collected information on the types of interventions and mentoring roles shared. Results from this study could provide direction to systems and schools interested in assisting and supporting their new teachers during their first year in the profession for the purpose of retaining them in the school district.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of the present study.

Mentor

For the purpose of this study, a mentor is defined as a peer who has a Teacher Support Specialist (TSS) certificate endorsement issued by the Professional Standards Commission (PSC) of Georgia and who has been chosen by a selection committee to provide assistance and guidance to assigned beginning teachers (Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-3-3-.07 Mentor Teacher Program GBHA).

Mentoring

Mentoring is defined as a nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development (Head, Reiman, & Thies-Sprinthall, 1992; Norton, 2000; Odell, 1990). Mentoring is carried out within the context of an ongoing, caring relationship between a mentor and protégé (Griffin, Wohlstetter, & Bharadwaja, 2001).

Beginning Teacher or Protégé

A beginning teacher or protégé is a teacher with fewer than three years of teaching experience, either new to teaching or to the system, as identified by the local school system (Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-3-3-07 Mentor Teacher Program GBHA).

Induction

Induction is defined as a planned professional development program intended to provide some systematic and sustained assistance, specifically to beginning teachers, for at least one school year (Huling-Austin, 1990). The induction program includes the orientation activities, orientation follow-up events, and the mentoring component. The orientation provides beginning teachers with broad views of the organization and acquaints the newcomers with formal district procedures and policies (Zepeda, Hedrick, & Riley, 1996). Follow-up events are focused on curriculum, community characteristics, proven instructional strategies, effective management techniques, and supervisory and evaluation practices (Zepeda et al., 1996).

Coaching

Coaching is a hands-on, in-classroom transfer of exemplary teaching skills and strategies from the mentor to the beginning teacher (Joyce & Showers, 1981). Coaching includes the provision of companionship, giving of technical feedback, analysis of when to apply a model and the effects of its application, adaptation of the model to the needs of students, and interpersonal facilitation during the practice period (Joyce & Showers, 1982). Coaching also involves on-site classroom demonstration of teaching, practice with feedback, and cycles of assistance (Head, Reiman, & Thies-Sprinthall, 1992).

Retention

Retention, for the purpose of this study, was defined as a beginning teacher who remained in the middle Georgia school district where the mentoring experience was provided. Non-retained teachers were those who did not remain in the school district, including those who moved to another position (administration, media specialist, counselor, etc.), moved to another district or state, or left teaching all together.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study was completed using survey response information from 162 beginning teachers who began work in a middle Georgia suburban school system during the 2001-2002 or 2002-2003 school years. Generalizations of the results may be limited by the size of the population sample.

2. While mentoring training and guidelines were standardized throughout the program in the district involved in the study, there may be individual differences in mentoring styles and behaviors that might have influenced results.

3. Participants of the study may have terminated their contract with the school system for reasons not related to the purposes of the study. An attempt was made, through an exit interview, to determine the reasons for contract termination so that these factors could be identified (e.g., transfer of a spouse's employment).

4. It has been understood for some time now (Lortie, 1975) that the retention of teachers is determined by a host of demographic, professional, environmental, psychological, organizational, and social factors. These variables were not controlled in this study and may have had impacts on retention that were not identified in the outcomes of the data analysis.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter II included a review of the literature and related research. The review of related literature began with the historical background delineating the nature of the challenges faced by beginning teachers. The review also provided a narrative description of the induction process and other programs related to supporting the beginning teacher. A description of mentoring and the roles and functions assumed by mentors were examined. The review of the literature concluded with findings of the outcomes of mentoring relationships and the benefits of mentoring to a beginning teacher. Chapter III detailed the research design, descriptions of the population, and the procedures used to collect and analyze data. Chapter IV reported the findings of the study including the testing of each hypothesis and the analyses of the retention data related to mentoring and mentoring behaviors. Chapter V included a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Summary

Nationwide, states are running out of qualified teachers as enrollments and academic standards are rising. However, data from numerous studies indicated that the problem is not a shortage of teachers, but a problem of turnover (Keep Good Teachers, 2000).

While mentoring programs differ on specifics, the purpose is the same—to provide the beginning teacher with a helper-friend who is not part of the school administration and who has the time and personal qualities to be of assistance. Research has shown that there is a relationship between the existence of mentoring programs and beginning teacher retention. This study sought to examine the impact of a mentoring relationship on the retention of teachers. It also included an investigation of specific strategies used by the mentors and their impact on the retention of beginning teachers.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The most critical stage in the process of becoming a teacher occurs during the first year (Peterson, Williams, Dick, & Dunham, 1998). Often the success or failure of the first year determines the likelihood of the beginner choosing to remain in the teaching profession. Helping new teachers become veteran teachers is an important step in addressing teacher shortages (Bolich, 2001). In research on teacher retention, Bolich found that the retention of beginning teachers was critical to maintaining an adequate supply of teachers and that understanding the experiences and situations that cause new teachers to leave the profession was one way in which to curb the exodus.

Teaching is a very challenging job, and unlike other professions, new teachers are not given the luxury of easing into their jobs (Bolich, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). They must assume all the duties of the veteran teacher from the first day (Clement, 1995). According to Peterson et al. (1998), many individuals offer support and encouragement to the new teacher during their first years; however, these relationships often are not defined well enough to provide the structure that new teachers need. Without the support and structure of helping peers, new teachers often leave the profession within the first years. In a study conducted in 1992, Odell and Ferraro asserted that 30% of new teachers do not teach more than 2 years. Unfortunately, the attrition rate has remained high and more recent researchers (Ingersoll, 2001; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Texas State Board for Educator Certification, 2000) have found the attrition statistics have continued to increase. A recent study found more alarming evidence that retention of teachers must become a national priority [National Commission on Teaching and America's

Future (NCTAF, 2002]. The NCTAF study reported that no teacher supply strategy will ever keep our classrooms staffed with quality teachers if we do not reverse the debilitating rate of teacher attrition. Darling-Hammond, Berry, and Thoreson (2001) found that the attrition rate for those who enter through “alternative” teacher preparation pathways can be as high as 60%.

Formally structured induction programs that provide support for teachers beginning their initial years in the profession have become more common in school systems around the country (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). One example of a structured and formal approach of assisting new teachers is mentoring. The element of mentoring most common to all programs is the idea of a more experienced teacher taking an interest in a beginning teacher and actively fostering that person’s success and professional growth through both professional and personal means (Peterson et al., 1998). Formal support for beginning teachers, in the form of mentoring, is one way to allow for an easier transition into the profession. Mentoring programs assume that beginning teachers, although well prepared in content and theory, still have much to learn about teaching.

This literature review examined the historical aspects that outline and described the challenges faced by beginning teachers. Included in the review is information about the current introduction process, known as induction, that many new teachers participate in as they begin their first year of teaching as well as the identified barriers that effect the transition of the beginning teacher into the classroom. A description of mentoring and the roles and functions assumed by mentors were examined. The review of the literature concluded with findings of the outcomes of mentoring relationships and the benefits of mentoring to a beginning teacher.

The focus of this review was on the process of mentoring as one component of the induction process and to report the impact that mentoring programs have had on the retention of

first year teachers. Specific mentoring roles and functions were identified that have been reported in the literature and research on mentoring programs and the relation of the roles and functions of mentors to teacher retention. The review begins with the historical aspects that have been identified for the need to support beginning teachers and concludes with findings related to retention of beginning teachers and participation in mentoring programs of support.

Historical Background of the Need for Beginning Teacher Support

Conant's *The Education of America's Teachers* (1963) was among the first to call attention to the needs of the beginning teacher. Since that time, numerous researchers (Black, 2001; Bradley & Gordon, 1994; Brindley, Fleege, & Graves, 2000; Holloway, 2001; Huling-Austin, 1992a; Linik, 2001; Theis-Sprinthall, 1984; Veenman, 1984) have identified the need for supporting beginning teachers. For example, Garde (1978), in researching the beginning teacher experience, reported that new teachers discovered that they were not as well prepared as they had thought and that they faced unanticipated gaps in their professional competencies. Veenman (1984) termed the experience "reality shock" as he described the transition from student teaching to the harsh reality of everyday classroom life (p. 144). This reality shock becomes even more difficult to accept and to overcome because novice teachers often leave teacher education programs and enter the profession believing that "teaching is not all that difficult" (Huling-Austin, 1992b, p. 174). Lawson (1992) reported that this lack of pre-service preparation may be due to "teacher education programs that provide prospective teachers with various kinds of foundations for their work, but not the completed edifices" (p. 166).

It is, in part, this experience of early frustration with lack of teaching accomplishment that acts to discourage teachers from continuing in the profession (Chapman, 1983). Chapman (1984) reported that the quality of the first teaching experience has been found to be more

important in retaining a new teacher than either the quality of the teacher-preparation program or the new teacher's academic performance. It is often after only a short exposure to the realities of teaching that many beginning teachers become frustrated, stressed to the point of ill health, and often choose to leave the profession rather than to seek help in learning the additional skills they need to survive (Klausmeier, 1994).

Beginning teachers in difficult and challenging situations often have the highest turnover rate (Bolich, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2003). Because of their lack of success with their presented challenges, these new teachers often feel like failures and find teaching "frustrating, unrewarding, and intolerably difficult" (McLaughlin, Pfeifer, Owens, & Yee, 1986, p. 420).

As a result of these and other studies on the lack of preparation and support for the first year teacher, induction programs for beginning teachers have become a common feature in many schools and school systems throughout the United States. For many decades, reformers have recommended the implementation of induction programs to ease the transition of beginning teachers into full-time teaching. With the emerging teacher shortage, induction programs have become one of the strategies for overcoming teacher shortages and reducing high turnover rates (Huling-Austin, 1990).

What is Induction?

As early as 1962, induction was a process equated with entry into a school as a beginning teacher (Lawson, 1992). Induction programs often included an introductory session with the principal and other teachers to discuss materials, schedules, and the daily operations of the school. An orientation to the building and other information regarding procedures and expectations was also part of the induction process.

Induction was defined as a “planned professional development program intended to provide some systematic and sustained assistance, specifically to beginning teachers, for at least one school year” (Huling-Austin, 1990, p. 536). Stansbury and Zimmerman (2002) defined induction as the first few years of employment, when a teacher is socialized into the system. The induction period is when a new teacher strives for acceptance by students, peers, and supervisors, and the beginning teacher attempts to achieve a comfort and security level in dealing with everyday problems and issues. According to Reiman and Thies-Sprinthall (1993), a teacher induction program focuses on improving learning and teaching for students, retaining novice teachers, and increasing professional efficacy.

Induction programs have been used as a method for supporting new teachers because becoming a teacher is not a simple transition from teacher-preparation program to the classroom, but rather, entering teaching is a social process involving complex interactions (Lawson, 1992). The induction process provides this needed transitional support to beginning teachers throughout their first year in various ways. Induction programs may include an orientation to materials, procedures, and expectations as well as other school and classroom related information. Induction, in contrast to orientation, acquaints the beginning teacher with the culture, values, climate, and characteristics of the organization and the norms of the school community (Zepeda et al., 1996).

Many induction programs also include a component that pairs a novice teacher with an experienced teacher. Researchers have concluded that induction programs that included supporting peers, or mentors, was the preferred method of inducting new teachers (Clement, 1995; Huling-Austin, 1990; Little, 1990). According to Huling-Austin (1990), beginning teacher induction programs, which included a mentoring component, have become one of the most

common reforms for improving the retention and quality of beginning teachers. The establishment of beginning teacher-mentor relationships is now a primary component of many teacher induction programs intended to influence beginning teachers' beliefs and practices (Gratch, 1998). Koerner (1992) believed that an induction program that included the support of an experienced teacher as a mentor helps to shape a beginning teacher's beliefs and practices in a more positive manner. Lawson (1992) optimistically asserted that because of the increased emphasis and attention on induction, including mentoring, perhaps the end of the "sink-or-swim socialization" of new teachers can be realized (p. 166).

Teacher Isolation

The importance of supportive colleagues is well documented in the teacher induction literature (Bey, 1990; Huling-Austin, Odell, Ishler, Kay, & Edelfelt, 1989; Huling-Austin, 1990) as well as in studies on learning to teach (Moir & Baron, 2002; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). While most new teachers come from preparation backgrounds that encourage sharing and guidance, new careers often begin in isolation. Lortie (1975) detailed the isolation inherent in the early years of teaching, and he reported that the "organization of schools constrains the amount and type of interchange possible; beginning teachers spend most of their time physically apart from colleagues" (p. 72). Bakkenes, Brabander, and Imants (1999) confirmed this separation by defining teacher isolation as "the extent to which teachers are restricted from or restrict themselves from interactions with other individuals or groups in the school" (p. 2). This separation or isolation from others creates a barrier between a new teacher and his or her support group, a group that could share advice on teaching strategies and competencies.

Klug and Salzman (1991) found that teachers who worked in isolation might not receive the necessary self-improvement feedback from veteran teachers and therefore not receive

encouragement for continued growth. Isolation becomes even more entrenched because most beginning teachers fear they may be considered incompetent if they request assistance from others or appear to lack the skills needed for teaching (Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986). Newberry (1977) also found that beginning teachers were unwilling to seek assistance, fearing that in doing so, they raised questions about their competence and possibly jeopardized their chances for continued employment.

Glidewell, Tucker, Todt, and Cox (1983) stated that 92% of beginning teachers did not seek help from more experienced colleagues except through the swapping of stories. Even if advice was sought, research reported that new teachers may not receive the specific help they need (Glidewell, et al. 1983). Compounding the problem, as Tischer (1984) reported, was that experienced teachers often preferred to remain as uninvolved as possible, and they were reluctant to help new colleagues, asserting the belief that new teachers should cope on their own.

In addition to the difficulties of receiving the advice and assistance needed, isolation also causes beginning teachers to harbor unrealistic views of their teaching abilities (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). For example, beginning teachers often unrealistically think that their performance was the same as that of a more experienced teacher (Norton, 2000). Feiman-Nemser (1983) summarized that because of the isolation of beginning teachers, they often experienced difficulty in attempting to gauge successes and effectiveness. In a 1983 study, Feiman-Nemser described a behavior pattern that emerges with beginning teachers attempting to work things out on their own without the advice and support of more experienced colleagues. Such a situation contributes to the new teacher having a limited knowledge of instructional and classroom management alternatives.

In contrast, researchers in the California New Teacher Project (CNTTP) study (1991) found that beginning teachers who received intensive support from experienced teachers during their first years were more likely than non-supported new teachers to use a greater variety of textbooks, learning aids, and other instructional resources. Beginning teachers who had the support and advice of an experienced teacher also attempted more challenging teaching plans and had higher student engagement rates than non-supported beginning teachers (CNTTP, 1991).

To counter the problems of isolation, Holloway (2001) recommended that beginning teachers be afforded opportunities to meet with experienced teachers to work on the solutions to common problems. Holloway suggested that scheduling time for beginning teachers to meet with experienced teachers may help to reduce isolation. Hutchings (1994) proposed the development of a workplace culture in which novice and experienced teachers would be colleagues in which they could share what they know, critique each other's work, and assist each other to improve. Essentially creating a less isolating workplace culture would assist the beginning teacher in becoming acclimated to the profession and to the context of the school.

The guidance and assistance of experienced teachers appears to be especially important for those new teachers in challenging situations. Zaharias and Frew (1991) supported the general finding of the importance of guidance and advice new teachers received from trusted, more knowledgeable colleagues. They found that, without this support, beginning teachers often become discouraged and prematurely abandon their teaching career. Zaharias and Frew also found that isolated new teachers often adopted a repertoire of survival or "getting-by strategies" that resulted in an overall teaching style that "militates" against their ever becoming effective teachers (p. 49).

Teacher Socialization

Teacher socialization processes have come under scrutiny as emphasis is placed on retaining beginning teachers. The literature is replete with accounts and documentation of the effects of beginning teacher socialization. Lortie (1975) demonstrated through research on teacher socialization that the transition from beginning teacher to veteran is not a simple transition from one role to another. According to Lortie, the transition was a “social process involving complex interactions between and among prospective and experienced teachers and their social situations” (p. 164). Little (1982) pointed out that new teachers often had high expectations of collegiality and that one of the main ways teachers characterized their school was by whether faculty were close and routinely worked together. Schuman (1987), in research on workplace socialization, found that supportive relationships were ranked among the 10 strongest motivational factors, higher than money or status. If socialization is found to be linked to career success, to job satisfaction, and to teacher effectiveness, schools could benefit from a better understanding of the nature of teacher socialization and the need for collegial support.

In proposing a social learning model on the influences of teacher retention, Chapman (1983, 1984) found that the expectation for long-term teacher retention can be improved through opportunities in which beginning teachers were provided a consistent and supportive induction period. Chapman’s (1983) research found that the greater a teacher’s involvement in the professional aspect of his or her career and the more social ties that person had to others in the school, the more likely that teacher would remain employed. Chapman’s social learning model suggested that the “roots of long-term teacher retention are longitudinal and harken back to the teachers’ early commitments to and experiences in teaching” (p. 274). Chapman’s study also

suggested that an examination of beginning teachers' social integration needed to consider the influence of family, friends, and supervisors as well as peers.

Colbert and Wolff (1992) described the "trial-by-fire" system of teacher socialization. Their research found that with school cultures lacking in socialization strategies "only the strongest and most determined survive, and these are not always the most talented and creative teachers" (p. 193). Darling-Hammond (1994) also noted that new teachers leave at much greater rates than mid-career teachers, particularly if they did not receive mentoring or support during their first years of teaching.

Mentoring

Educational reformers have proposed various solutions to the problems of teacher recruitment, pre-service preparation deficiencies, and teacher retention. One promising solution that has received increasing attention is mentoring (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Mentoring models can range from formalized mentoring programs to less structured "buddy" systems (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

The term "mentor" can be traced to Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. The original Mentor was entrusted with the care and guidance of Odysseus' son, Telemachus. Mentor's role was to care for Telemachus and to guide the young man to adulthood (Odell, 1990). Mentor served as role model, guide, and facilitator in helping Telemachus to grow and to learn. Mentor provided this support and guidance by helping Telemachus to experience learning and to draw meaning through his involvement in the adult world. At the same time, Mentor did not attempt to make the younger man a clone of himself or of Odysseus. From this perspective, a mentor can be thought of as a transitional figure, a sage who assisted with the move toward self-knowledge (Debolt, 1992).

Definitions of Mentoring

The term mentor has taken on many different meanings since its early definitions. Mentioned in Sheehy's (1976) *Passages* and Levinson, Darro, Kline, Levinson, and McKee's (1978) *The Season's of a Man's Life*, mentoring was reintroduced into modern culture and described as a process for offering a supportive and protective peer. In the more recent literature, a mentor has been described as being synonymous with teacher, coach, trainer, role model, protector, sponsor, leader, or promoter (Wang & Odell, 2002). In the academic setting, a mentor is friend, guide, counselor, but above all, a supportive teacher (Odell, 1990). Odell (1989) and Zimpher and Rieger (1988) defined a mentor as a developer of talent, coach, door opener, sponsor, protector, or confidant. Kay (1990) defined a mentor as a person who participated in a significant effort toward helping an individual to become self-reliant and a protégé as a person who was the recipient of such assistance as well as a participant in the process of becoming self-reliant. In a review of related literature, Head, Reiman, and Thies-Sprinthall (1992) summarized findings that the word mentoring connoted a special relationship—one that included expectations of a level of commitment and comprehensiveness not currently found in many mentoring programs and relationships.

Healy and Welchert (1990) proposed a commonly advanced definition of mentoring as a dynamic, reciprocal relationship. Given this definition, mentoring presumes a work environment between an advanced career incumbent (mentor) and a beginner (protégé) aimed at promoting the career development of both. Mentoring at its best is reciprocal (Zepeda, 2003). Sweeney (2001) thought mentoring was a “process of accomplishing a series of developmental tasks while creating a confidential, supportive, and mutual relationship” (p. xi) and Head, Reiman, and Thies-Sprinthall (1992) offered that a mentor served as a trusted colleague, developer,

symbolizer of experience, coach/supervisor, or anthropologist for their protégé. This perspective incorporated the view that effective mentoring occurred when the mentor and beginning teacher accepted the complexity of their roles.

To advance a knowledge base for future research, a definition of mentoring was offered that has been adapted from the Georgia Teacher Support Specialist Handbook:

Mentoring is defined as a nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development. Mentoring functions are carried out within the context of an ongoing, caring relationship between the mentor and protégé. (Anderson & Shannon, 1987, p. 38)

The roles and responsibilities of the mentor must be carefully defined so that the mentor and protégé have a clear understanding of the functions provided within the relationship. The teacher-mentor context should be clear. Beginning teachers should be aware of identified categories of support that the mentor will provide as important first steps in the teacher mentoring process (Odell, 1990).

Characteristics of Mentoring

School districts are becoming aware of the critical role they play in preparing beginning teachers for their role in the classroom. School districts realize that experienced colleagues do influence the professional development of beginning teachers, and they provide positive influences through formal mentoring (Sargent, 2003). Schools that are successful in retaining new teachers and in helping them reach a high level of instructional competence do so by providing a systematic process of mentoring (Blank & Sindelar, 1992).

Feiman-Nemser (1983) stated, in an early review of the mentoring process, that by promoting observation and conversation about teaching, mentoring helped teachers to develop

more tools for continuous instructional improvement. To address instructional and management deficiencies, mentors provided teacher training that was more class-centered or practiced-based. In this class-centered model, instructional strengths and weaknesses were identified in the context of realistic, actual problems (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

Much of the knowledge that mentors transfer to new teachers is intangible and not contained in teacher preparation programs but rather through experiences gained in the classroom (Norton, 2000). The mentoring model, in contrast to traditional approaches to professional development for beginning teachers, requires more initiative, involvement, and structured participation on the part of the mentor and beginning teacher (Moir & Barron, 2002). Mentoring assumes that the beginning teacher will be involved in every stage of planning, implementing, and evaluating professional improvement. In researching the mentoring process developed in California, Moir and Barron found that a high level of commitment and participation on the part of the mentoring partners is needed for the mentoring process to create the desired outcomes—growth and development.

In their investigation of mentoring relationships, Healy and Welchert (1990) found a polarized view of mentoring. One typical conception, often described as “classical” mentoring, interprets mentoring as dynamic, occurring spontaneously, over the long-term, potentially profound on impact. Their research identified another view of mentoring which involved assigned, short-term arrangements pairing a mentor and protégé which resulted in improvements of limited significance.

According to a study undertaken by Tauer (1995), a formal mentoring program in which goals and outcomes were mutually understood and agreed on, provided a good working foundation for the mentor partnership. In a formal mentoring program, all participants

acknowledge the goals of the program, use a common language, and share common expectations. Tauer recommended that administrators beginning a mentoring program establish a set of goals that reflect the philosophy of the program and communicate these goals to all participants.

Joyce and Showers (1982) argued that if mentoring programs were to have an effect on the actual teaching behavior of beginning teachers, these programs must provide meaningful support to the new teacher throughout the induction period. Joyce and Showers likened the process to that of “coaching teams,” in which a coaching environment was established. Joyce and Showers identified five major functions that must be included in a coaching environment. These functions included:

- (a) provision of companionship,
- (b) giving of technical feedback,
- (c) analysis of application,
- (d) adaptation to the students, and
- (e) personal facilitation.

These functions of the coaching component increased the likelihood that teachers would be able to transfer a new method or model into their classroom practices with a higher degree of success (Joyce & Showers, 1982).

To guide the selection and preparation of mentor teachers, as well as how they fulfill their roles, members of the Association of Teacher Educators’ (ATE) produced a monograph identifying the fundamental principles of mentoring. ATE identified key elements that could be used to guide the development and implementation of mentoring efforts. At its annual conference in 1991, the Association of Teacher Educators’ adopted 10 mentoring principles.

The principles were listed as follows:

1. Mentoring is a complex process and function.
2. Mentoring involves support, assistance, and guidance, but not evaluation of the protégé.
3. Mentoring requires time and communication.
4. Mentoring should facilitate self-reliance in protégés.
5. Mentoring is bigger than induction.
6. Mentoring programs should involve local school districts in collaboration with institutions of higher education, state departments of education, and teachers' bargaining groups.
7. The structure of mentoring programs should be consistent with school district goals.
8. Mentoring programs should be evaluated.
9. Mentors should be selected based upon identified criteria.
10. Mentors should be prepared (trained) and offered incentives for their work. (Huling-Austin, 1992a, p. 4)

These 10 principles are found in related literature and offer individuals designing a mentoring program valuable information for ensuring the success of a mentor/protégé relationship. The mentoring program elements are critical for providing the connection between the mentor role and beginning teacher improvement.

The Roles and Functions of Mentors

Current researchers (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Jones, 1997; Nieto, 2003; Sargent, 2003) have connected the importance of the mentor role to the outcome of beginning teacher improvement and retention. This body of research described many mentor roles with the most frequently reported being those related to being teacher, confidant, and role model. According to

Blank and Sindelar (1992) mentors needed a blend of intuitive sensitivity and technical expertise. Mentors must be highly proficient instructors with a strong base of pedagogical knowledge and be motivated to pass on their knowledge to the beginning teacher. Mentors should be respected by their peers and mentoring partner and be able to engender trust and respect in others while being confident, secure, flexible, and sensitive (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Though mentors serve in numerous roles, they primarily promote the new teachers' professional competence and personal growth (Jones, 1997). Mentors must serve as role models for coping with the complexities of teaching and understanding the standards of behavior inherent in schools (Sargent, 2003).

Thies-Sprinthall (1980) indicated that some experienced teachers were not developmentally complex or reflective enough themselves to engage in effective mentoring relationships. As a result of these findings, Thies-Sprinthall and Sprinthall (1987) proposed systematic mentoring training based on developmental principles. To determine the influence of training on mentors, Little (1990) encouraged future research that focused on comparisons of mentors who received training in preparation for the mentoring role with those mentors who did not receive training. Gray and Gray (1985) also found mentors and their protégés to be more successful if they were trained for their roles. They developed the Mentor/Protégé Helping Relationship Model which identified levels of support and knowledge provided to protégés as they move from Level One to Level Five (Table 2.1). In this model, the behaviors are linked to the level of support provided through the pairing of the mentor with the protégé. At Level One, the mentor plays a predominant role that gradually lessens as Level Five is reached.

Table 2.1

Mentor/Protégé Helping Relationship Model

Level	Mentoring Practices
One	<p>Read about typical problems and concerns experienced by novices, Receive training on how to work with protégés and other support personnel, Prepare and teach demonstration lessons so protégés can observe specific techniques or materials being used, Provide indirect mentoring by arranging for protégés to learn from other competent teachers, Protect protégés from foreseeable problems and unjust criticism, Promote staff acceptance of protégés, and Locate resources protégés need for teaching.</p>
Two	<p>Role model how to get things done within the politics of the school so protégés fit into the school culture, Demonstrate specific teaching techniques and materials, Sell protégés on realistic ways of performing tasks such as establishing classroom management, Provide external reinforcement, and Show protégés how to prepare course unit plans and previews/overviews.</p>
Three	<p>Giving protégés guided practice to ensure that they succeed.</p>
Four	<p>Mentor listens to and encourages the protégé’s proposals to try out his or her own ideas, teaching style, classroom management scheme, and so on, Mentor fosters discovery, learning, creativity, and self-evaluation while supporting the protégé’s attempts to organize new values into his or her value system.</p>
Five	<p>Protégé is competent and confident enough to function without mentor assistance.</p>

The intent of effective mentoring, according to Gray and Gray (1985), is to reach level five and to be able to solve problems without the guided assistance of a mentor. The protégé needs no additional help in solving problems in those areas where they have acquired sufficient experience and competence in level five. When protégés need additional mentor help with something new, mentors return to the appropriate level of the model as indicated by its feedback

loop. If this helping model is conceptualized and implemented it can meet the needs of beginning teachers and provide increased professional satisfaction to mentors (Gray & Gray, 1985).

In a representative sample of 367 districts surveyed by the Far West Laboratory (Little, 1982), researchers found that the 5 most commonly assigned mentor roles were:

- (a) staff development or consultation with individual teachers,
- (b) conducting school or district level professional development,
- (c) assisting teachers in locating and organizing curriculum materials,
- (d) curriculum development, and
- (e) classroom or other assistance.

Mentors also serve as instructional advisors (Johnston & Ryan, 1980). As such, mentors assist beginning teachers in planning lessons, organizing for instruction, assessing student progress, locating and developing resources, and motivating students. Therefore, to serve in this advisory capacity, mentors need a broad conceptual understanding of the elements of good instruction. Teachers who are thoughtful practitioners and who possess strategic problem-solving skills, prove to be able mentors in providing instructional support. Mentors also play the role of caring and concerned friend (Blank & Sindelar, 1992). Mentors are accessible listeners who provide support, encouragement, and praise to their protégés (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

Alleman (1982), in related research, concluded that since no general definition of “mentor” existed, that more importantly, mentor behavior was the primary issue. He believed that the behaviors that have the greatest impact could be identified and taught. Phillips (1977) also researched mentor behaviors and their impact on protégés and found that mentors who

served in “primary” roles had greater impact on protégé success. Phillips defined primary role mentors as those who shared expertise, gave personal blessing, and took a personal interest in the protégés career and well-being.

The role of the mentor and its relation to the success of the partnered protégé has been documented in the literature (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Gray & Gray, 1985; Little, 1990). The behavior of the mentor, including support and sharing of instructional knowledge, has an impact on the future success of the protégé (Phillips, 1977).

Mentoring Outcomes

The benefits of a mentoring partner have been validated in numerous studies (Black, 2001; Colbert & Wolff, 1992; Holloway, 2001; Jones, 1997; Linik, 2001; Slater, 1997). Results have indicated that support behaviors among adults in mentoring opportunities are multidimensional. Many factors emerged as having positive support outcomes and were distributed across a range of behaviors (Colbert & Wolff, 1992).

One study conducted by the Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL) was initiated in 1988 to investigate alternative models of teacher support and assessment to measure enhanced teacher retention (Garmston & Bartell, 1991). The SWRL evaluation showed that with the addition of the California New Teacher Project (CNTTP) model, which included mentoring teams, teacher retention was improved. In fact, the study found that at the end of 3 years an average of 95% of the beginning teachers in the program were still teaching. Colbert and Wolff (1992) reported that each year the CNTTP model was in place the retention rates of program-supported new teachers were significantly higher than the retention rates of new teachers in non-CNTTP districts.

One finding, which is especially noteworthy, involved new teacher support for retaining teachers from under-represented ethnic groups. Among the participating teachers, the CNTP “almost completely eliminated the problem of new teachers in under-represented ethnic groups leaving the profession because of isolation, alienation, and frustration” [California New Teacher Staff (CNTS), 1991, p. 23]. A recent study on the retention of minority teachers in Connecticut’s public schools also found that mentoring was the most beneficial component of the induction process for most first-year teachers of under-represented ethnic groups (Slater, 1997).

In South Carolina, a study of 400 first-year teachers reported mentors to be most helpful in providing support and knowledge of the school and district (Jones, 1997). The three areas of mentoring mentioned as most important were providing moral support, disciplining students, and dealing with parents. An additional finding showed that over 90% of the mentored teachers who were a part of the study planned to remain in the profession.

Using a survey to assess beginning teachers’ perception of an induction program in one Ohio county system, Zaharias and Frew (1991) noted several positive mentoring outcomes. All program participants successfully completed their first year of teaching and were granted contracts for the upcoming year and all respondents indicated they intended to continue teaching. Sixty-two percent of the beginning teachers felt that their teaching performance improved as a result of the mentoring. Respondents reported that they gained confidence, they were more open to new ideas, and they were more aware of the effects of their behaviors on students and parents.

Another Ohio study conducted by Bradley and Gordon (1994) confirmed these findings, including the important finding that mentoring promoted increased retention of promising teachers. Twenty-seven percent of the participating school districts reported a higher retention rate of beginning teachers. School districts also reported that mentoring program involvement

had major positive effects on beginning teachers' instructional techniques, student discipline, use of curriculum, and relationships with other teachers. In a Georgia study of 393 beginning teachers, significantly more novices demonstrated mastery of teaching competencies related to effective teaching when assigned a mentor (Tanner & Ebers, 1985).

Extending the findings of other research related to mentoring networks, Firestone and Pennell (1997) added to the notion that teacher mentoring contributed to teacher learning, motivation, and empowerment. Littleton, Tally-Foos, and Wolaver (1992) found that teachers helping teachers through mentoring programs was becoming a preferred professional development model. They noted that if education was to survive, avenues of collaboration must be created, and mentoring could create these avenues. The researchers documented a successful mentoring program, the Tarleton Model for Accelerated Teacher Education (TMATE). The TMATE program served primarily rural school districts in north-central Texas. In the 1989 study, 99% of the mentors involved in the program felt that mentoring improved the instruction of beginning teachers. In a study by the Education Commission of the States (2003), it was reported that accomplishment in teaching was not dependent on graduation from a teacher preparation program, but rather in the course of support teachers received in their first few years of actual teaching, that teachers become accomplished professionals. The study found that with mentoring support, teachers developed the skills they needed to improve teaching skills.

Increased career satisfaction is another outcome of mentoring according to a study conducted by Eastman and Williams (1993). Faculty protégés appeared to benefit from mentoring, and findings suggested that planned feedback and exploration under the guidance of more experienced people was crucial for career development. In fact, Singh and Shifflette

(1996) reported that teachers acknowledged emotional and instructional support from peers as the most important factors in their professional development.

Chapter Summary

This literature review, in summary, provided evidence of the benefits of a new teacher induction program that includes mentoring. A mentoring team, consisting of a beginning teacher and mentor, has been found in numerous studies (Bradley & Gordon, 1994; Colbert & Wolff, 1992; Garmston & Bartell, 1991; Holloway, 2001; Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 2000; Slater, 1997) to promote increased career satisfaction and improved classroom performance. In studies in which beginning teachers received mentoring support, retention rates were higher for those receiving support than for those not receiving support (Bradley & Gordon, 1994; Colbert & Wolff, 1992; Garmston & Bartell, 1991; Linik, 2001; Lloyd, Wood, & Moreno, 2000). However additional research is still needed to determine the impact that mentors have on retaining beginning teachers. Research which focuses on determining the specific types of support that contributed to the retention increases will give insight and provide future direction for developing mentoring programs.

Therefore, it was the purpose of this study to determine if mentoring impacts the retention rate of beginning teachers. The present study also investigated the specific mentoring role(s) that beginning teachers perceive to be the most beneficial in support of their decision to remain or to leave the teaching profession.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study was conducted to determine whether participation in a school-based mentoring program would make a difference on beginning teacher retention following the first year in a middle Georgia school district. The Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey (BTMS) was developed for this study and included items to gather information about the number of hours a beginning teacher participated in school-based mentoring (Appendix A). The BTMS also gathered data about how much time a mentor and a beginning teacher were involved in specific mentoring activities. These mentoring activities were identified in the literature as the most common areas of support that a mentor would provide to a beginning teacher.

Research has shown that beginning teachers who had access to intensive mentoring by colleagues are much less likely to leave teaching in the early years (Darling-Hammond, 1994). A report from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2002) indicated that a number of districts have reduced attrition rates of beginning teachers by more than two-thirds by providing a mentor partner. This study was designed to determine the effect that a school-based mentoring partner had on the retention of beginning teachers for a single school system in Georgia.

Restatement of the Problem

The problem of hiring newly trained teachers and retaining them within the professional ranks is a growing concern (Darling-Hammond, 2003). To understand the nature of the circumstance that many beginning teachers find themselves in, consider the following hypothetical example:

Jane is a first year teacher at Lighthouse Elementary School. Although she successfully completed a four-year program in education in preparation for a teaching career, she found herself ill-prepared for the demands of her teaching assignment. She spent late hours in preparation for her class only to end the day exhausted and needing to begin the preparation for the next day. Each day Jane became more tired and more frustrated. Fortunately, she met Ms. G., a teacher who had taught for the last 10 years. Ms. G. helped Jane with her mounting paperwork, undisciplined students, and instructional ideas. She and Jane worked together to better prepare for students who needed extra help and to share materials and resources. Jane and Ms. G. ate lunch together, talked every day after school, and sometimes called each other during the weekends. Jane thinks that Ms. G. helped to keep her in the classroom and helped to make her a better teacher. (Fagan & Walter, 1996, p. 113)

The partnership between Jane and Ms. G. is an example of a mentoring relationship, one in which an experienced adult befriends and guides a less experienced adult (Fagan & Walter, 1982). The importance of these relationships has been recognized for decades as contributing to a beginners' success (Levinson et al., 1978; Roche, 1979; Vaillant, 1977).

To gain further information about mentoring relationships in the context of new accountability measures and instructional demands, beginning teachers in a single middle Georgia school district were studied to determine the difference that mentoring would make on retention rate in the school district. This study examined whether a systematic program of mentoring for beginning teachers impacts their retention rate and whether there were specific mentoring activities that beginning teachers participated in that improved retention rates in the district.

Variables

Independent variable

The independent variables in this study were the number of hours of mentoring activities and strategies provided by a mentor teacher to a beginning teacher.

Dependent variable

The dependent variable was the retention information collected on each beginning teacher following their first year in the school district.

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were developed to address the questions raised in the statement of the problem regarding the difference school-based mentoring would make on beginning teacher retention. The data used to test these null hypotheses were generated from responses to the items on the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey (BTMS). Respondents would include the beginning teachers ($N = 230$) who were hired during the 2001-2002 or 2002-2003 school years. Each participant was mentored for the period of one year. The BTMS survey was distributed to all beginning teachers and collected at the end of the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 school years.

Ho:1

There is no statistically significant relationship between the total number of hours beginning teachers participate in a school-based mentoring program (as measured by the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey) and beginning teacher retention in the system.

Ho:2

There is no statistically significant relationship between the number of hours beginning teachers participate in a specific mentoring strategy (as measured by the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey) and the retention of the beginning teacher in the system.

Population of the Study

The study population included all teachers with less than three years of experience ($N = 230$) who began work in a middle Georgia school district in the 2001-2002 or 2002-2003 school years. The study population was compiled by identifying the names of all teachers who were hired by the school district between June 1, 2001 and December 31, 2001 or June 1, 2002 and December 31, 2002. This information was taken from monthly reports compiled by the school system's computer database. The names of teachers in the sample population who had three or more years of experience were deleted from the population. The study population,

therefore, included only the beginning teachers hired by the school system during these two school years with the exception of those hired between January 1, 2002 and May 31, 2002 and after January 1, 2003. It was decided to exclude the beginning teachers hired after January due to the fact that there would not be sufficient time to participate in mentoring activities and to test effects on retention. All participants were administered the BTMS survey at the end of year one. The system computer database was used to determine if the study participants remained in the system at the beginning of year two.

Instrumentation

The Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey was developed by the researcher to assess the relationship between retention in the school district and beginning teachers who were mentored from those who were not. The BTMS used 12 mentoring roles, taken from the literature, to determine the nature of the interaction between a mentor and a beginning teacher. The BTMS instrument was used to collect information from the study participants about the approximate number of hours they had been involved with a mentoring partner in each of the 12 mentor roles. Additionally, the total number of hours shared between the mentor and a beginning teacher was tabulated from the BTMS instrument.

The BTMS instrument was distributed to each member of the study population at the end of one year of teaching. Each beginning teacher who was present at the year-end induction session in April was given a survey to complete and to return. Those who were not present were mailed a BTMS for completion. Beginning teachers were instructed to complete the instrument either individually or with the assistance of their mentor.

Demographic information was included on the instrument so that additional conclusions could be made about subgroup populations and their retention after one year of teaching. Names

of respondents were included on the survey instrument so that the retention data could be verified from the school district's database.

Validity

Construct validity for the BTMS instrument was determined through the literature on the role of a school-based mentoring partner. Table 3.1 lists the citations identified from the literature for each of the mentoring roles and these items were included in the BTMS.

Table 3.1

Literature Citations for Mentoring Roles

Question	Sources from the Literature
1. Giving information related to procedures, guidelines, and expectations of the school system	Ganser, 1996; Gray & Gray, 1985; Moir & Baron, 2002; Odell, 1986; Shulman & Colbert, 1987; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Wildmam, Maglaro, Niles, & Niles, 1992
2. Collecting, disseminating, or locating materials or other resources	Moir & Baron, 2002; Odell, 1986; Wagner, 1985; Zimpher & Rieger, 1988
3. Giving information about teaching strategies or the instructional process	Ganser, 1996; Gray & Gray, 1985; Moir & Baron, 2002; Norton, 2000; Odell, 1986; Shulman & Colbert, 1987; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Zimpher & Rieger, 1988
4. Offering support by listening empathetically and sharing experiences	Ganser, 1996; Griffin, Wohlstetter & Bharadwaja, 2001; Moir & Baron, 2002; Odell, 1986; Peterson, Williams, Dick, & Dunham, 1998; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Wildman et al., 1992
5. Giving guidance and ideas related to discipline and student management	Bolich, 2001; Ganser, 1996; Gray & Gray, 1985; Moir & Baron, 2002; Odell, 1986; Shulman & Colbert, 1987; Wildman et al., 1992; Zimpher & Rieger, 1988
6. Offering information about organizing and planning the school day	Ganser, 1996; Holloway, 2001; Odell, 1986; Wildman et al., 1992; Zimpher & Rieger, 1988

Table 3.1 (Continued)

Literature Citations for Mentoring Roles

Question	Sources from the Literature
7. Helping arrange, organize, or analyze the physical setting of the classroom	Ganser, 1996; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Odell, 1986
8. Teaching while the beginning teacher observes	Bradley & Gordon, 1994; Griffin, et al., 2001; Kent, 1985; Linik, 2001; Moir & Baron, 2002; Norton, 2000; Odell, 1986; Shulman & Colbert, 1987; Zimpher, 1988
9. Critiquing and providing feedback on the beginning teacher's performance	Bradley & Gordon, 1994; Griffin, et al., 2001; Holloway, 2001; Kent, 1985; Linik, 2001; Moir & Baron, 2002; Peterson, et al., 1998; Shulman & Colbert, 1987; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Zimpher, 1988
10. Giving help or ideas related to conferencing on working with parents	Fagan & Walter, 1982; Odell, 1986; Zimpher & Rieger, 1988
11. Providing the beginning teacher with emotional support and encouragement	Ganser, 1996; Moir & Baron, 2002; Griffin et al., 2001; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Wildman et al., 1992
12. Informing the beginning teacher about school culture and climate	Ganser, 1996; Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 2000; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002

Reliability

Reliability of the instrument was determined using the observer agreement method (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). In order to determine whether the survey completion of the beginning teacher would match that of his or her mentor, a pilot group of 15 beginning teachers and mentors completed the BTMS. Completion agreement between the mentor and beginning teacher was measured by comparing the results of the survey findings of the beginning teacher to

that of the mentor. Completion agreement was determined to be 90% for the pilot group testing the survey instrument. It was determined from the pilot group that the response of the beginning teacher on the BTMS would be satisfactory to use in testing the study hypotheses.

The pilot group also assisted in critiquing the BTMS questions. Beginning teachers and mentors were asked to critique the survey questions and to indicate any ambiguities or items in need of revision. The survey was then revised according to their suggestions.

Research Design

The variables in this study were analyzed using a correlational design incorporating a post-test only control group design. Beginning teachers were divided into groups depending on the levels of mentoring they received during their first year of teaching. The amount of mentoring, the treatment, was random. Some beginning teachers received little or no mentoring whereas others received a high level of mentoring. This design was used to determine the relationship between the number of hours a beginning teacher received in mentoring support and the beginning teacher's decision to remain in the system.

The subjects in this study included 230 beginning teachers in a single school district in middle Georgia. These teachers started work in the middle Georgia school district in the 2001-2002 or 2002-2003 school years. The total population of beginning teachers in the study was divided into three groups determined by the range of mentoring hours they participated in as determined by the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey. Using the number of hours mentored each week that each respondent marked on the BTMS survey, a level of mentoring from low (*less than 1 hour*), medium (*1-3 hours*), to high (*more than 3 hours*) was recorded. The answer to the question on the BTMS regarding the decision to remain or to leave the system was then matched to each sample member's identified level of mentoring. Retention information provided

by the study participant was verified using the system’s personnel database.

The information from the three groups studied was compiled. The data were compared using the analysis of variance (ANOVA) technique to examine the variability of the sample values. Based on the information provided from the ANOVA test, the null hypothesis was tested at the alpha level of .05. The assumptions needed for an ANOVA test were met—independent random samples were taken from each population, the sample populations were normal, and the population variances were equal (Norusis, n.d.).

The secondary research question, to determine the relationship between the type of mentoring strategy the beginning teacher participated in and the decision to remain in the system, was tested and analyzed. The information from each survey response was tabulated using Table 3.2. Table 3.2 shows the participant response to each of the mentoring roles listed as questions 1–12 on the BTMS survey. Data were collected to show how each respondent marked the item to indicate the number of hours of mentoring they experienced in that category during the period of one year. Respondents used the following numbering system to indicate their level of mentoring support: (1) never, (2) less than 1 hour, (3) between 1 and 3 hours, (4) between 4 and 10 hours, and (5) 11 or more hours. The data table was then analyzed using a Pearson’s Correlation to compare each question with the retention data recorded in column labeled Ret.

Table 3.2

Sample Table of the Comparison of Beginning Teacher Retention to Number of Hours of Participation in a Specific Mentoring Strategy

Participant	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Ret.
Protégé One	2	2	2	2	3	1	2	2	1	2	3	2	0
Protégé Two...	3	5	5	3	3	3	5	5	4	4	5	5	1

Note. Retention data are labeled 0 – left the system and 1 – remained in the system.

Analysis

Information collected from the BTMS was used to create the database for analysis. The sample population was derived from the listing of beginning teachers compiled by the system and tracked on the system computer database. The sample population was taken from monthly reports of all beginning teachers hired by the middle Georgia school district between June 1, 2001 and December 31, 2001 or between June 1, 2002 and December 31, 2002. Once the population was identified, each participant was given a BTMS at the year-end induction session held in April or was mailed a Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey.

The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics including calculations of the frequency, mean, standard deviation, and the degree of relationships among variables. While measures of central tendency were useful for summarizing the distribution scores, they were inadequate for describing the variability that exists within a distribution (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). The frequency, mean, and the standard deviation for the number of survey respondents indicating each level of mentoring on the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey (BTMS) were calculated. The variable reflecting each subject's score for the total number of hours involved in school-based mentoring were categorized into a high, medium, or low level. For example, all subjects participating in mentoring less than one hour were categorized as having a low rate of mentoring, between one and three hours were categorized as having a medium rate of mentoring, and greater than three hours were categorized as having a high rate of mentoring.

The relationship between variables—total number of mentoring hours participated in and beginning teacher retention—was analyzed using an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The null hypothesis was tested for rejection at the alpha level of .05.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to examine school-based mentoring programs across 40 schools in a Georgia school district to determine the difference these programs would make in the improvement of beginning teacher retention. Teachers with less than three years experience were surveyed to deduce findings. The Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey (BTMS) was developed by the researcher for this purpose. The survey was developed to gather information about the total number of hours a beginning teacher participated in school-based mentoring as well as to determine information about the number of hours they were provided specific mentoring strategies.

The study population included all teachers with less than three years of experience ($N = 230$) who began work in the Georgia school district in the 2001-2002 or 2002-2003 school years. The study participants included teachers new to the system who had taught less than three years as well as those entering with no experience in the classroom.

In the school year 2001-2002, a total of 172 teachers began work in the Georgia school district. Of the 172 who began working in the district in 2001-2002, 115 (66.9%) had less than 3 years experience. In 2002-2003, a total of 202 teachers began working in the school district, with 115 (56.9%) having less than 3 years experience. Because the two groups of beginning teachers did not differ significantly, the data from all respondents were combined for further description and analysis. Therefore, the study population ($N = 230$) included the total number of beginning teachers for the two school years combined.

Data were collected on the study population at the year-end induction sessions held in April. Beginning teachers were brought together in April 2002 or April 2003, depending on their year of entry into the school district. All beginning teachers who were present at the year-end induction sessions were given the BTMS. Those who were not present at the April meeting were mailed a survey. Of the 230 surveys distributed to the study participants, 162 responded to the BTMS survey for a return rate of 70.4%. Gay (1981) indicated that a rate of survey return above 70% should allow valid conclusions to be reached.

A quantitative study approach was used to gain perspectives about the retention of beginning teachers and their participation in school-based mentoring. The researcher developed a survey instrument to assess the relationship between beginning teacher retention and participation in mentoring. The researcher identified the 12 most common mentoring roles from the literature to develop the survey instrument, the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey. The survey was administered to all beginning teachers ($N = 230$) who began work during the 2001-2002 or 2002-2003 school years.

The information from the literature review as well as the findings from the survey instrument were used to gain additional insights into possible actions that may impact the retention of beginning teachers. This topic was especially timely as school districts address teacher shortages and attrition rates. The retention of beginning teachers is critical to maintaining an adequate supply of teachers, and understanding the experiences and situations that cause new teachers to remain in the school district is one way to decrease the attrition rates.

The results of the data analysis, including tests of the hypotheses, are reported in this chapter. Findings from the research are summarized and used to determine the significance of the study hypotheses.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic information was collected about each beginning teacher including: (a) gender, (b) number of years of experience in teaching, and (c) grade level of the teaching experience. The demographic information allowed the researcher to create a profile of the respondents and to compare the responses from the various demographic groups. The demographic summary profile results are reported in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Demographic Summary of Survey Respondents

Title	Category	Number	%
Gender	Male	31	19.1
	Female	131	80.9
Years Experience	0 year	145	89.5
	1 year	8	4.9
	2 years	9	5.6
Grade Level of Teaching Experience	Elementary (K – 5)	96	59.3
	Middle (6 – 8)	35	21.6
	High (9 – 12)	31	19.1

Gender was one demographic area identified for each study participant. The data revealed that of the 162 beginning teachers that responded to the survey, 31 (19.1%) were male, and 131 (80.9%) were female.

Additional data were collected to determine the number of years of teaching experience for each survey respondent. The survey sought to gather information about beginning teachers, those who have taught for less than three years, and therefore did not tally results for teachers with three or more years of experience.

Of the 162 respondents, 145 (89.5%) were in their first year of teaching. This number included 43 teachers who began teaching in the system as part of the Georgia Teacher Alternative Preparation Program (GA TAPP). The GA TAPP was started in 2001 for individuals with a Bachelor's Degree interested in teaching but without the certification needed. Eight respondents (4.9%) had taught for 1 year and 9 (5.6%) had taught for 2 years. The number of years of teaching experience was not limited necessarily to the school district of the study, as the participants included those who entered the school district with one or two years of experience.

The survey also collected information about the grade level of teaching experience for each study participant. Of the 162 respondents, 96 (59.3%) had served in an elementary school, 35 (21.6%) had taught in a middle school, and 31 (19.1%) were high school teachers.

Insights from the demographics of survey respondents gave additional information about the benefits of a mentoring partner and retention in the school district. The benefits of a mentoring partner were determined for male and female respondents as well as elementary, middle, and high school level beginning teachers. Data were also collected to assess the impact of a mentoring partner on the participants of the GA TAPP and their retention in the school district.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive information was analyzed to include the frequency and percent of response to each questionnaire item. The descriptive data are found in Table 4.2 and includes the information collected from questions 1-12 on the BTMS survey. Study participants responded to the BTMS questions by indicating the amount of mentoring hours that they had received in 12 specific mentoring activities over the period of 1 year. The different levels that a study participant could use to indicate the total number of hours of participation with a mentor are:

1 – never (0 hours); 2 – rarely (less than 1 hour); 3 – sometimes (1–3 hours); 4 – often (4–10 hours); 5 – very often (11 hours or more). For respondents that did not provide an answer to a specific activity, the amount of mentoring hours was catalogued in the never category (1) of

Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Frequency of Responses – Beginning Teacher Levels of Mentoring Hours for Specific Strategies or Activities

Question 1 – Received information related to procedures of the school

Hours in Strategy ¹	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	32	19.8	19.8
2	13	8.0	27.8
3	26	16.0	43.8
4	45	27.8	71.6
5	46	28.4	100.0
Total	162	100.0	

Question 2 – Received information related to expectations of the school

Hours in Strategy	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	32	19.8	19.8
2	16	9.9	29.6
3	28	17.3	46.9
4	40	24.7	71.6
5	46	28.4	100.0
Total	162	100.0	

Question 3 – Received help in collecting materials or other resources

Hours in Strategy	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	33	20.4	20.4
2	16	9.9	30.2
3	28	17.3	47.5
4	41	25.3	72.8
5	44	27.2	100.0
Total	162	100.0	

¹ Indicates the number of hours a beginning teacher participated in a specific mentoring strategy

Table 4.2 (Continued)

Frequency of Responses – Beginning Teacher Levels of Mentoring Hours for Specific Strategies or Activities

Question 4 – Received information about teaching strategies

Hours in Strategy	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	29	17.9	17.9
2	17	10.5	28.4
3	26	16.0	44.4
4	41	25.3	69.8
5	49	30.2	100.0
Total	162	100.0	

Question 5 – Received support from mentor through their listening empathetically

Hours in Strategy	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	25	15.4	15.4
2	13	8.0	23.5
3	13	8.0	31.5
4	35	21.6	53.1
5	76	46.9	100.0
Total	162	100.0	

Question 6 – Received ideas related to discipline

Hours in Strategy	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	28	17.3	17.3
2	19	11.7	29.0
3	25	15.4	44.4
4	44	27.2	71.6
5	46	28.4	100.0
Total	162	100.0	

Question 7 – Received information about planning the school day

Hours in Strategy	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	32	19.8	19.8
2	24	14.8	34.6
3	29	17.9	52.5
4	35	21.6	74.1
5	42	25.9	100.0
Total	162	100.0	

Table 4.2 (Continued)

Frequency of Responses – Beginning Teacher Levels of Mentoring Hours for Specific Strategies or Activities

Question 8 – Received help in arranging the physical setting of the classroom

Hours in Strategy	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	58	35.8	35.8
2	27	16.7	52.5
3	29	17.9	70.4
4	22	13.6	84.0
5	26	16.0	100.0
Total	162	100.0	

Question 9 – Received feedback following a peer observation

Hours in Strategy	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	44	27.2	27.2
2	15	9.3	36.4
3	17	10.5	46.9
4	46	28.4	75.3
5	40	24.7	100.0
Total	162	100.0	

Question 10 – Received ideas about conferencing with parents

Hours in Strategy	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	40	24.7	24.7
2	16	9.9	34.6
3	41	25.3	59.9
4	33	20.4	80.2
5	32	19.8	100.0
Total	162	100.0	

Question 11 – Received emotional support and encouragement

Hours in Strategy	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	29	17.9	17.9
2	12	7.4	25.3
3	16	9.9	35.2
4	30	18.5	53.7
5	75	46.3	100.0
Total	162	100.0	

Table 4.2 (Continued)

Frequency of Responses – Beginning Teacher Levels of Mentoring Hours for Specific Strategies or Activities

Question 12 – Informed about school culture

Hours in Strategy	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	42	25.9	25.9
2	15	9.3	35.2
3	22	13.6	48.8
4	39	24.1	72.8
5	44	27.2	100.0
Total	162	100.0	

Survey item analysis from the BTMS gave insight into the nature of the mentoring interaction between the beginning teacher and his or her mentor. The frequency of response for each item was analyzed to deduce findings about the amount of time that a mentor and his or her protégé spent in specific mentoring strategies most often mentioned in the literature. The analysis showed that there was variability between the amount of time a mentor and his or her protégé spent using a specific strategy. In examining the two highest levels of mentoring that a beginning teacher could mark—often (4) and very often (5)—the frequency response indicated a range from a low of 29.6% to a high of 68.5%. Information about the findings from each question is compiled below.

Question 1 on the BTMS survey, receiving information about school procedures, showed a moderately high level of interaction between the beginning teacher and mentor. Fifty-six percent of the respondents reported having received mentoring support on this topic for four or more hours during the school year. Twenty-eight percent reported having received almost no support from a mentor in this area.

Receiving information about the expectations of the school, Question 2 on the survey, showed that survey respondents received a moderately high response from beginning teachers

about mentoring support in this area. Fifty-three percent indicated having received mentoring in this area for at least four or more hours. Twenty-nine percent reported having received almost no support in this area.

Receiving help in collecting materials and resources, Question 3, showed a moderately high level of mentoring interaction. Fifty-three percent of respondents checked that they had received four or more hours of support in collecting resources from their mentor. However, 30% indicated very little support, less than 1 hour, in this area.

Responding to question 4 on the BTMS survey, receiving information about teaching strategies, survey participants indicated a moderately high level of mentoring. Fifty-six percent of respondents indicated that their mentor had spent 4 or more hours sharing ideas on teaching strategies, and only 28% checked that their mentor had spent less than 1 hour on this topic.

Question 5, receiving support from a mentor through listening empathetically, showed the highest level of mentoring support of all strategies listed on the survey. Sixty-nine percent of beginning teachers responding to the survey indicated that a mentor had spent more than 4 hours listening to their concerns and problems over the period of one year, and of the 69% engaged in this activity, 47% indicated that their mentor had spent 11 or more hours in this area. Only 23% of respondents indicated that they had had very little support in this area.

Receiving ideas related to discipline, Question 6, is another activity that was recorded as having moderately high levels of mentoring support. Fifty-six percent reported having at least four hours of support in this area from a mentor.

Survey participants responding to Question 7, receiving information about planning the school day, indicated that 48% received 4 or more hours in this activity. Thirty-five percent indicated that they had very little interaction with a mentor in this area.

Question 8, receiving help in arranging the physical setting of the classroom, showed the lowest response from beginning teachers as to the support provided by a mentor. Only 30% of respondents indicated that a mentor had spent at least 4 hours in helping with the classroom arrangement. Fifty-three percent reported that a mentor had spent less than one hour with them in this activity. Of the 53% reporting less than 1 hour in help with classroom arrangement, 36% reported that a mentor had not helped with this activity at all.

Survey respondents to Question 9, receiving feedback following a peer observation, indicated a moderately high level of mentoring support. Fifty-three percent of survey participants indicated that they had had at least four hours of support following an observation of another teacher. However, 37% reported that they participated in this activity for less than 1 hour.

Question 10, receiving ideas about conferencing with parents, showed a moderately low level of mentoring among the five choices. Approximately 40% of respondents indicated that they had participated in this activity with a mentor for at least 4 hours, while another 35% indicated less than 1 hour of mentoring support.

Receiving emotional support and encouragement, Question 11, was found to be an activity in which respondents reported a high level of mentoring support. Sixty-five percent of beginning teachers marked that they had received 4 or more hours of emotional support from a mentor, and of the 65% engaged in this activity, 46% reported that they had received more than 11 hours of emotional support and encouragement from their mentor. Only 25% reported that they received little emotional support from a mentor.

Question 12, receiving information about school culture, was indicated a having a moderately high level of interaction between beginning teachers and their mentor. Fifty-one

percent marked that they had received information about school culture for at least 4 hours while 35% indicated that they had not received this information from a mentor.

Of the 12 mentoring activities listed from the literature as the most commonly performed and included on the BTMS, 2 activities stood out as having been provided at the “very often” level for the study participants and included receiving support from the mentor through listening empathetically (46.9%) and receiving emotional support and encouragement (46.3%). Other activities that were surveyed were found to involve a lower level of interaction with participants recording a level of mentoring at “very often” from 24.7% to 30.2% and included receiving information related to school procedures, expectations, and culture; receiving help in collecting resources; receiving information about teaching strategies, discipline, and planning the school day; and receiving feedback following a peer observation. Two mentoring strategies surveyed showed a lack of mentoring focus for survey participants including receiving help in arranging the physical setting of the classroom (16.0%) and receiving ideas about conferencing with parents (19.8%).

Research Questions

After adducing findings and results from survey descriptive statistical data (as already reported in this chapter), data were statistically treated to answer subsidiary research questions. Analysis of variance (F ANOVA) and Pearson correlations (r) were calculated for the survey data using a .05 alpha level of significance. Data were statistically treated to determine if there were any significant relationships between the amount of mentoring support provided to a beginning teacher and his or her retention rate in the school system.

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between the total number of hours beginning teachers participate in a school-based mentoring program (as measured by the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey) and retention in the school system?

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between the total number of hours beginning teachers participate in a school-based mentoring program (as measured by the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey) and retention in the school system.

The frequency of response for each survey participant is listed in Table 4.3 for question 13 on the BTMS survey. Question 13 of the BTMS survey was used to gather information about the total number of hours of mentoring each beginning teacher participated in with a mentor. Question 13 asked the survey participant to estimate the average number of mentoring hours received each week during the first year of teaching in the school system. Using the number of hours mentored during each week that each respondent marked on the BTMS survey, a level of mentoring from low (less than 1 hour), medium (*1–3 hours*), to high (*more than 3 hours*) was recorded. This level of mentoring was then compared to the fact that the respondent remained in the school system or left the system after the year of mentoring. Table 4.3 shows the number of respondents that indicated each level of mentoring.

Table 4.3

Number of Survey Respondents Indicating Each Level of Mentoring

Levels of Mentoring	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cumulative Percent
Low - 1	31	19.1	.68	.48	19.1
Medium - 2	40	24.7	.92	.27	43.8
High - 3	91	56.2	.85	.36	100.0
Total	162	100.0	.83	.37	

Descriptive data indicated that the majority of survey respondents indicated on the BTMS survey that they received a high level of mentoring from their mentor during their first year in the school district. Fifty-six percent reported that they received more than three hours of mentoring during each week. A small percentage (19.1) indicated that that received less than 1 hour of mentoring per week.

Using the ANOVA calculations and comparison of the levels of mentoring and retention in the school system, statistically significant correlations (using a .05 significance level) were found. This data are displayed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Analysis of Variance for Levels of Mentoring Provided a Beginning Teacher and Retention in the School System

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.*
Levels of Mentoring	1.105	2	.552	4.105	.018*
Error	21.395	159	.135	-	-
Total	135.000	162	-	-	-
Corrected Total	22.500	161	-	-	-

Note. R Squared = .049 (Adjusted R Squared = .037)

The Analysis of Variance (Table 4.4) shows that there is a statistically significant relationship in the tested variables—levels of mentoring and beginning teacher retention. The difference in mean square values denotes variability of the between-groups (MS = .552) and the within-groups (MS = .135) values. The *F* ratio ($F = 4.105$) indicates that the sample means vary more than expected if the null hypothesis were true. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected ($p = .018$).

To determine the subgroups that were statistically significant, the Tukey Test was used. These data are represented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Tukey Analysis of Comparisons of Levels of Mentoring

Levels of Mentoring (I)	Levels of Mentoring (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.*
Low (1)	Medium (2)	-.25	.013*
Low (1)	High (3)	-.17	.069
Medium (2)	High (3)	.0788	.494

Based on observed means

The Tukey Test (Table 4.5) indicated that there was a difference in retention of beginning teachers between the low and medium levels of mentoring groups. Beginning teachers participating in Level One (*less than one hour*) mentoring did not remain in the system at a rate equal to those who participated in Level Two (*one – three hours*) mentoring. There was a .013 significance level for the comparison of these groups. Using the .05 alpha level of significance, there was no difference in retention between subgroups who participated in Level One and Level Three (*more than three hours*) or between those who participated in Level Two and Level Three. Based on the findings and within the limitations of the study, the null hypothesis, Ho1 was rejected.

Further analysis was conducted to determine the significance of the secondary research question. Related findings are catalogued below.

Research Question 2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the number of hours beginning teachers participate in a specific mentoring strategy (as measured by the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey) and the retention of the beginning teacher in the system?

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between the number of hours beginning teachers participate in a specific mentoring strategy (as measured by the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey) and the retention of the beginning teacher in the system.

Each question on the BTMS survey was analyzed using the Pearson correlation to determine the relationship between using a specific mentoring strategy and the retention of beginning teachers in the system. The results are shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Correlations of Specific Mentoring Strategies to Beginning Teacher Retention (N = 162)

Questions from BTMS Survey	Pearson <i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Question 1	.045	.568
Question 2	.007	.925
Question 3	.021	.795
Question 4	.042	.599
Question 5	.097	.221
Question 6	.025	.753
Question 7	.081	.306
Question 8	.050	.525
Question 9	.104	.186
Question 10	.048	.545
Question 11	.111	.159
Question 12	.082	.302

Of the 12 strategies that a beginning teacher could participate in with a mentor, none of the strategies alone, as analyzed using the Pearson correlation, indicated a relationship to retention. No comparisons were found to be significant at the .01 level or below and therefore based on the Pearson correlation analysis, the null hypothesis, Ho2 was accepted.

Chapter Summary

In summary, the Analysis of Variance provided evidence for a statistically significant relationship between the total number of hours beginning teachers participate in a school-based mentoring program and retention in the system. The data from the ANOVA Test showed a difference in mean square values for between-groups (MS = .552) and within-groups (MS = .135) which supported the rejection of the null hypothesis. The ANOVA data provided a significance value ($p = .018$) to reject Ho1. The Tukey data provided additional evidence for the

rejection of the null hypothesis by indicating a difference in retention between the beginning teachers who received a low level of mentoring and those who received a medium level. The Tukey Test ($p = .013$) provided statistical evidence for the rejection of H_01 .

There was, however, no statistically significant relationship found between the number of hours beginning teachers participate in a specific mentoring strategy (as measured by the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey) and the retention of the beginning teachers in the system. The Pearson Correlation showed no significance for comparisons of mentoring strategies to retention. Therefore, H_02 was accepted.

Chapter V includes a summary of these research findings along with discussion and conclusions. There are also recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study are presented in this chapter. The chapter is organized into eight sections including (a) summary of purpose, (b) summary of procedures, (c) summary of descriptive data, (d) summary of findings, (e) conclusions and discussion, (f) recommendations for further study, (g) implications, and (h) final thoughts.

Summary of Purpose

The purpose of the study was to examine school-based mentoring programs across forty schools in a suburban Georgia school district to determine the difference these programs would make in the improvement of beginning teacher retention. The study was guided by the following two research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between the total number of hours beginning teachers participate in a school-based mentoring program (as measured by the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey) and beginning teacher retention in the system?
2. Is there a relationship between the number of hours beginning teachers participate in a specific mentoring activity (as measured by the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey) and the retention of the beginning teacher in the system?

All beginning teachers who had less than three years of experience and who were hired in a Georgia school district during the 2001-2002 or 2002-2003 school years were surveyed using the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey ($N = 230$). The survey was used to determine the total number of hours a beginning teacher participated in school-based mentoring during the school

year as well as the number of hours he or she participated in specific mentoring activities. A beginning teacher was defined as a teacher entering the system with less than three years of experience.

The study was designed to investigate whether mentoring of beginning teachers helped in retaining them in the school district and whether there were certain activities that had more of an impact than others in improving retention. The insight gained through this study might give additional information to individuals in the school district about how the mentoring of beginning teachers impacts their decision to remain in the system. In addition, the findings of the study may assist those who are charged with developing the budget for mentoring, both at the state and local levels, to have an understanding of the impact that mentoring has on the retention of beginning teachers.

Summary of Procedures

The variables in this study were analyzed using a correlational design incorporating a post-test only control group design. One group of study participants experienced the treatment, mentoring, while the other group of participants did not. Study participants who experienced the treatment were selected on a random basis thereby controlling for selection and mortality design compromises.

The study used a quantitative approach to collect and to analyze data. Data accumulated for analysis included demographic information as well as survey findings related to a beginning teachers' participation in mentoring during his or her first year in the school district. Data were provided using a survey instrument (BTMS) developed by the researcher. The researcher developed the BTMS instrument using mentoring activities that were identified in the literature as the most commonly used with beginning teachers. The instrument listed the 12 mentoring

activities and directed the beginning teacher to mark the level of mentoring, from never to very often, that they participated in each activity with their mentor. The BTMS also asked each beginning teacher to estimate the number of mentoring hours that they were provided during each week in their first year of teaching in the district.

All beginning teachers ($N = 230$) who began work in a Georgia school district in the 2001-2002 or 2002-2003 school years were included in the study. Data were collected on the study population at the year-end induction sessions held in April. Beginning teachers were brought together in April 2002 or April 2003, depending on their year of entry into the school district. All beginning teachers who were present at the year-end induction sessions were given the BTMS. Those who were not present at the April meeting were mailed a survey. Of the 230 surveys distributed to the study participants, 162 responded to the BTMS survey for a return rate of 70.4%.

Each survey participant was asked to use the 12 mentoring activities to indicate the total number of hours that he or she participated in the activity with the mentor. The survey participants were asked to indicate the total number of hours using a range from the BTMS survey. The range of hours that the beginning teacher could mark included (*1-never*) 0 hours, (*2-rarely*) less than 1 hour, (*3-sometimes*) between 1 and 3 hours, (*4-often*) between 4 and 10 hours, and (*5-very often*) 11 hours or more. The survey also included a question about the intention of the beginning teacher to return to the school district the following year. Other general information was also collected including name, grade level taught and number of years of experience. The survey was designed to be completed in less than 30 minutes.

Once all surveys were collected, data were analyzed using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to determine statistically

significant relationships in mentoring and beginning teacher retention. Statistically significant relationships were determined using the alpha level of .05.

Summary of Descriptive Data

The demographic information collected for each beginning teacher included: (a) gender, (b) number of years of experience in teaching, and (c) grade level of the teaching experience. All demographic information was verified using the school district's public information database.

Most of the survey respondents were female (80.9%). The greatest percent (89.5%) were in the first year of teaching, with only 5.6% in their third year of teaching. Fifty-nine percent of the survey participants were teaching at the elementary level (grades K–5). The smallest population (19.1%) was teaching at the high school level (grades 9–12).

Descriptive information was also collected and analyzed pertaining to the findings of the survey respondents. The BTMS survey was developed to assess the relationship between beginning teacher retention and school-based mentoring. Twelve mentoring roles were taken from the literature and identified as the most common mentoring activities. Construct validity for the BTMS instrument was determined using literature citations on the role of a school-based mentoring partner. Citations from the literature for each of the 12 mentoring roles are listed in Chapter III (see Table 3.1). The BTMS survey responses were analyzed for each of the 162 study participants.

Summary of Findings

The following summarizes the findings for each of the studies' research questions and null hypotheses as a result of the statistical tests that were calculated using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS).

Research Question 1

Is there a significant relationship between the total number of hours beginning teachers participate in a school-based mentoring program (as measured by the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey) and retention in the school system?

Ho1 (Null Hypothesis #1)

There is no significant relationship between the total number of hours beginning teachers participate in a school-based mentoring program (as measured by the BTMS) and retention in the school system.

The findings of this study confirm the benefits of a mentoring partner and that mentoring does positively impact beginning teacher retention. The BTMS information was compiled to determine the level of mentoring that beginning teachers received. Using the number of hours mentored during each week that the respondent marked on the BTMS survey, a level of mentoring from low (*less than 1 hour*), medium (*1–3 hours*), to high (*more than 3 hours*) was recorded. Table 4.4 includes the values used to compare the mean square values for between-groups ($M=.552$) and within-groups ($M=.135$) values for the comparison of levels of mentoring to beginning teacher retention. The difference in the mean square values (see Table 4.4) was found to be statistically significant with an F value of 4.105 ($p = .018$). The null hypothesis, Ho1, was rejected. To confirm the results of the ANOVA, a post-hoc test was completed to determine which groups were different from each other. The Tukey test (Table 4.5) confirmed the findings of the ANOVA and identified the groups that were statistically different. Differences were found between beginning teachers participating in a low level of mentoring and a medium level of mentoring. Beginning teachers participating in a low level (*less than one hour*) of mentoring did not remain in the system at a rate equal to those who participated in a

medium level (between one and three hours) of mentoring. There was no significant difference in retention between teachers who participated in a low level and a high level (*greater than three hours*) of mentoring, nor between a medium level and a high level of mentoring. A significance level of .013 was found for the Tukey analysis of between-groups comparison for the low and medium levels of mentoring and this confirmed the findings to correctly reject the null hypothesis for Ho1.

Research Question 2

Is there a statistically significant relationship between the number of hours beginning teachers participate in a specific mentoring strategy (as measured by the BTMS) and the retention of the beginning teacher in the system?

Ho2: (Null Hypothesis #2)

There is no statistically significant relationship between the number of hours beginning teachers participate in a specific mentoring strategy (as measured by the BTMS) and the retention of the beginning teacher in the system.

Beginning teacher respondents did not report any relationship in retention based on their participation in a specific mentoring activity. The Pearson correlation analysis (Table 4.6) was used to compare each mentoring activity with the retention data for each beginning teacher. Of the 12 mentoring strategies that a beginning teacher could participate in with a mentor, none of the strategies alone, indicated a relationship with retention. The null hypothesis, Ho2, was accepted.

Conclusions and Discussion

After analyzing the quantitative data collected in the research study, the following conclusions were made:

Conclusion 1

The mentoring of a beginning teacher does make a difference in retention. The beginning teachers' survey responses indicated that the number of hours they participated in a school-based mentoring program did impact their decision to remain in the school system. Beginning teachers indicated a difference in the rate of retention depending on the level of mentoring that they participated in with a mentor during their first year of teaching. Table 5.1 illustrates that beginners that received less than 1 hour of mentoring per week, Level 1, had a retention rate of 68%. Those who received between 1 and 3 hours, Level 2, were retained at a rate of 92% and those who participated in the highest amount, more than 3 hours, Level 3, had a retention rate of 85%.

Table 5.1

Comparison of Level of Mentoring to Retention in the School District

Levels of Mentoring	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Level 1	.68	31	.48
Level 2	.92	40	.27
Level 3	.85	91	.36
Total	.83	162	.37

Assumptions from the findings may lead to the conclusion that the more mentoring a beginning teacher received, the greater the retention rate. This conclusion was not validated in this study. The study did show that teachers who received the least amount of mentoring did return at the lowest rate; however, those who received the highest amount did not have the highest retention. Those beginners who received mentoring in the highest range, more than three hours per week, may have been teachers who were most in need of a veteran's support and therefore no amount of mentoring would be able to lessen their teaching problems. While the data suggested that retention was improved for those participants who received the highest level

of mentoring, it could not be concluded that there is a direct correspondence between the amount of mentoring and improved retention rate.

It is important to note that those teachers who received less than 1 hour of mentoring per week returned to the district at the rate of 68%. The literature on mentoring included in this study discusses projected retention rates for beginning teachers from 80 to 85% following their first year of teaching (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 2002; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Thomas & Kiley, 1994). The retention of beginning teachers included in this study who reported the lowest level of mentoring, less than one hour per week, is much less than findings reported in the literature review.

Bolich (2001) reported that the retention of beginning teachers was critical to maintaining an adequate supply of teachers and that understanding the experiences and situations that caused new teachers to leave the profession was one way in which to curb the exodus. The research-based survey used in this study included literature-based experiences and mentoring practices to evaluate the support needed by a beginning teacher. The BTMS results found that while there were no specific strategies that impacted retention, the overall mentoring support was worthwhile in improving retention. While there have been studies that document the benefit of a mentoring partner (Black, 2001; Holloway, 2001; Jones, 1997) and the effect on retention, this study confirms the finding that retention rates are improved through a mentoring partnership. Overall, of the beginning teachers who completed surveys ($N = 162$), a total of 83% returned to teach the next year (Table 5.1). This indicates an overall retention of beginning teachers that mirrors the nationwide population (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 2002; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). However, in studying those beginners who received between one and three hours of mentoring, a retention rate much higher than the national average

was indicated. They were retained at a level of 92%. While these figures do not take into consideration other factors that may contribute to the beginning teacher retention problem, the results do show a positive relationship between mentoring and beginning teacher retention.

Findings from a study conducted by Darling-Hammond, Berry, and Thoreson (2001) found that the attrition rate for those who enter through “alternative” teacher preparation programs can be as high as 60%. Alternatively prepared teachers were part of the group who participated in this research and their return rate in the school district did not approximate the literature findings. There were 43 alternatively prepared teachers who participated in the survey and 84% of them remained in the district. This may be attributed to the level of mentoring that they received. As part of the induction program, each alternatively prepared teacher was required to prepare a portfolio of their work and to document peer observations and reflections with a mentor. The positive retention outcome of these alternatively prepared beginning teachers may reflect this level of intense supervision and mentoring.

The quantitative data collected and analyzed in this study are consistent with the current literature on the impact of mentoring on the retention of a beginning teacher. In situations where a beginning teacher is offered an appropriate level of mentoring, between one and three hours per week, the retention is positively impacted.

Conclusion 2

Of the 12 mentoring strategies listed in the literature as the most common, this study found that none of the strategies alone impacts beginning teacher retention. The literature details the importance of mentoring for a beginning teacher, but there is little agreement as to what specific strategies should be included for greatest impact. For that reason, this study sought to

investigate the specific strategies that were shared between a mentor and his or her beginning teacher partner.

The importance of supportive colleagues is well documented in the mentoring literature (Huling-Austin, Odell, Ishler, Kay, & Edelfelt, 1989, Huling-Austin, 1990). Zaharias and Frew (1991) found that beginning teachers who do not receive support become discouraged and prematurely abandon their teaching career. The literature review found that mentors routinely included listening and emotional support as part of their mentoring strategy. Survey results in the present study, also found that respondents indicated that they most often received support through listening empathetically and receiving emotional support and encouragement. This confirms the research of Odell and Ferraro (1992) who reported that teachers most valued the emotional support that they received from a mentor during their first year of teaching. Another finding of Odell and Ferraro was confirmed in this study, that of a teacher placing the least value on the first year support they received in managing the school day and functioning within the school district. BTMS survey respondents reported the least involvement with a mentor in helping to arrange the classroom and in receiving ideas about conferencing with parents.

Study findings, therefore, lead to the insight that mentoring cannot be broken down into its components but the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. As a whole, mentoring can impact a beginning teachers' effectiveness and satisfaction with teaching. It is important to include as part of induction participation for each new teacher, the components of mentoring that have been found most effective in the literature.

Conclusion 3

Demographic data collected during the survey process helped to inform the research on the impact of mentoring on subgroups of the beginning teacher population. These subgroups

included teachers at different grade levels of teaching experience (elementary and secondary) and gender.

The research on beginning teacher retention included 96 elementary survey responders and 66 secondary teachers who returned a survey. Frequency reports indicated that 79% of elementary beginning teachers returned to the school district while 89% of the secondary teachers returned. The data on gender showed that 131 female teachers completed the survey and returned to the school district at a rate of 85%. Thirty-one male teachers responded and of those only 74% returned to the school district to another year of teaching. These findings, while not inclusive of all beginning teachers in the school district, do give additional information about the retention issues for subgroups of teachers.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study examined the impact of a mentoring partner on beginning teacher retention by investigating two aspects of the topic—total number of hours of mentoring and the amount of mentoring in a specific activity—as addressed in the mentoring literature. The findings of this study confirm the benefits of a mentoring partner and that mentoring does positively impact beginning teacher retention. One study hypothesis, Ho1, was rejected through the ANOVA test, which indicated that statistically significant relationships existed between mentoring and beginning teacher retention ($p = .018$). The Tukey test indicated that the difference in retention was between the beginning teachers who received the lowest level of mentoring and the beginning teachers who received a medium level of mentoring ($p = .013$).

This study found that of the beginning teachers who received mentoring support for one hour or more per week, retention in the school district was found to be at 89%. This finding is higher than that confirmed in the literature on mentoring, which states that retention of first-year

teachers to be between 80 and 85% (Ingersoll, 2001; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). Although, recognizing the limited literature related to the retention of beginning teachers when mentoring is a part of their first year experience, the recent literature does point to the importance of a mentoring partner, not only for retention issues, but also for encouraging professional competencies and providing emotional support to beginning teachers (Jones, 1997; Klug & Salzman, 1991; Moir & Barron, 2002; Norton, 2000).

Recommendation 1

Additional study is needed on the mentor training process and on ensuring the capacity to use only trained and certified school-based mentors. The literature on the differences in mentoring functions due to the ability level and training afforded the mentor is scant. While a mentoring partner may be assigned to a beginning teacher and support offered during weekly sessions, little is known about how the mentoring functions are carried out. The mentoring sessions are a function of the individual mentor and differences in the type of support offered may be great.

In research conducted by Little (1990) and then Wang and Odell (2002), future research was encouraged to focus on comparisons of mentors who received training in preparation for the mentoring role with those mentors who did not receive training. Moreover, Feiman-Nemser (1996) was suggesting that successful mentor programs are dependent on the quality of training afforded the mentors. While this study did examine information from the BTMS that would give information about the type of strategy used in the mentoring process, it is not clear how effectively these strategies were used by the mentor. To gain insight on the types of strategies used by mentors, qualitative research methods might be able to shed light on what has been, to date, elusive in the literature.

It is important to note that this study found that beginning teachers who had the least amount of contact with a mentor returned at a lower rate than the literature would suggest. This may indicate that additional research and study is needed to ensure that the capacity is provided at the school level to offer high quality and sustained mentoring opportunities. This may be especially difficult within a financially constrained budget; however, the cost of providing these opportunities may ultimately override the cost of the attrition of these beginning teachers.

This study's findings supported the benefits of a mentoring partner. Therefore, further research on the practices carried out by a mentor, using standardized mentoring processes, and the impact that this would have on beginning teacher retention, would assist other school districts to implement practices that would help curb the beginning teacher attrition and reduce teacher shortages.

Recommendation 2

Additional information should be collected on providing consistent mentoring opportunities to beginning teachers through the use of portfolios or other specified strategies. With the addition of a portfolio or other formalized strategies, the mentor contact is more structured and therefore may offer focused support that this literature review has shown to be lacking in a typical beginning teacher's support system. A structured mentoring system may hone in strategically on the issues that beginning teachers face and therefore provide the needed support to improve the skills and strategies needed for more effective classroom practices. This recommendation and its findings may increase the differences made in teacher retention through the support of a mentoring partner. An assumption could be made from the outcomes of this study that if the mentoring relationships were strengthened, beginning teacher retention may be increased.

Recommendation 3

A recommendation would be in order for further study on the retention of those groups who have been indicated as leaving the teaching profession in the highest numbers—teachers in difficult and challenging situations (Bolich, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2003), ethnic minorities (Slater, 1997), and alternatively prepared teachers (Darling-Hammond, Berry, & Thoreson, 2001). Current research does support the finding of increased retention through beginning teacher mentoring (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Linik, 2001; Slater, 1997); however, there is still a need to focus on those groups most impacted in their beginning year. If research can be provided that shows correlations between beginning teachers in these subgroups and higher levels of retention following a first year teaching experience, then school districts will have current information that can be implemented within their mentoring programs to have a direct impact on these subgroups.

Implications

This research study found that beginning teachers did respond positively to having a mentoring relationship with a veteran teacher and tended to remain in the school district at a higher level than those who did not receive mentoring. School districts are struggling with having enough competent teachers to fill vacancies. Each year, many of the vacancies created by teachers who have retired, moved, or left teaching, are filled with teachers who have little or no experience in the classroom. These beginning teachers find themselves faced with classroom issues that often make them consider leaving the profession. This study found that the help of a mentor did positively impact beginning teacher retention. In fact, the data showed that beginning teachers who received between 1 and 3 hours of mentoring a week remained in the system at a rate of 92%. The finding was significant with a p value of .018. However, it is not known which

specific mentoring practices influence the retention of teachers, especially those in the most impacted subgroups—alternatively prepared teachers, ethnic minorities, and teachers in the most difficult and challenging situations. Therefore, it is critically important that school districts investigate the mentoring strategies found to be most essential to teacher retention and to incorporate them into a formalized mentoring program.

The intent of establishing a mentoring relationship is to provide information and support critical to the beginning teacher's effectiveness in the classroom as well as for the purpose of impacting his or her retention (Huling-Austin, 1990; Linik, 2001). The findings of this study show a connection between mentoring and beginning teacher retention. Because of the lack of quantitative and qualitative data on the specific mentoring practices that influence beginning teachers in becoming more effective and in remaining in the system, programs for beginning teachers may be established that rely on superficial relationships between a beginning teacher and a veteran that do not provide mentoring practices that make a difference through increased retention rates.

Educators can use mentors to improve professional development for beginning teachers in one of two ways—they can encourage informal mentoring or they can develop formal mentoring programs (Fagan & Walter, 1982). Only further investigation can tell which of these approaches is better. In order to increase mentoring in a school district, Fagan and Walter (1982) make the following suggestions:

1. Teach novice and veteran teachers the importance of mentoring.
2. Reinforce veteran teachers who show a sincere interest in helping beginners.
3. Arrange the working environment so it is conducive to veteran and beginners becoming friends. Allow time for social and professional exchange.

The implication from this study is that mentoring is composed of certain elements that make it more than just a social exchange. School districts interested in beginning a mentoring program will need to test its own outcomes using comparisons of mentored and non-mentored teachers in retention, teaching effectiveness, and other district focused variables.

Final Thoughts

Over two million new K–12 teachers will be employed in the U.S. over the next decade due to increased student enrollments, reductions in class size, and accelerating retirements among an aging teacher population (Darling-Hammond, 1997). This large population of new teachers will be challenged to educate more diverse learners in an increasingly complex knowledge-based, technology-oriented society. Unfortunately, many first-year teachers are frequently left in a “sink or swim” situation with little support from colleagues and few opportunities for professional development (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996). Current estimates are that about 30% of the beginning teachers will leave their positions within 3 years and almost 15% leave after their first year (NCTAF, 2002). These findings challenge educators to find retention initiatives that have a positive impact on first-year teachers.

The challenges to first-year teachers will grow as new accountability mandates are placed on schools and school districts. These mandates accelerate the need for first-year teachers to become more effective and to be able to ensure student academic learning within their first year of teaching. Assistance from veterans to help beginners learn not only the culture and climate of the school but also strategies and methods for teaching are critically important.

The knowledge gained from a beginning teacher’s pre-service educational programs will be more important than ever before. It will no longer be acceptable for a teacher prepared for the classroom to need additional training to immediately affect student academic growth. The

district's focus will then be on ensuring that individuals who come into the school district without going through a traditional teacher certification route have the support and training needed to become effective. The financial and personnel burdens placed on a school district by the need for new teachers and preparing their replacements will grow over time unless the school district has a plan in place to address retention issues.

It is critical for school districts to begin to plan and to study their efforts regarding retaining their beginning teachers. It is too costly not to place a priority on the retention of the beginning teacher. As research by Wong and Asquith (2002) shows, every teacher who leaves within 3 years costs taxpayers an estimated \$75,000. This turnover is not only costly, but it reduces the number of teachers in the classroom and impacts the quality of teachers and student achievement.

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APPENDIX A

Beginning Teacher Mentoring Survey (BTMS)

Please complete this survey according to the directions given and return to Judy Godfrey in the Staff Development Department.

DIRECTIONS: Below is a list of mentor roles frequently cited in the literature. Use the scale below to indicate the extent to which you participated in each activity with a mentor during your first year in the county. You may consult with your mentor to answer the survey if needed. Place a check mark in the box that best matches the total number of hours you participated in the activity or strategy listed during your first year of employment. If you were not paired with a mentor you will need to place a check mark in the 1 column for each activity.

- 1 = never (0 hours) 4 = often (4 – 10 hours)
 2 = rarely (less than 1 hour) 5 = very often (11 hours or more)
 3 = sometimes (1 – 3 hours)

Mentoring activities/strategies	1	2	3	4	5
1. Received information related to procedures of the school					
2. Received information related to expectations of the school					
3. Received help in collecting materials or other resources					
4. Received information about teaching strategies					
5. Received support from your mentor through their listening empathetically					
6. Received ideas related to discipline					
7. Received information about planning the school day					
8. Received help in arranging the physical setting of the classroom					
9. Received feedback following a peer observation					
10. Received ideas about conferencing with parents					
11. Received emotional support and encouragement					
12. Informed about school culture					
What would you estimate to be the <i>average</i> number of mentoring hours provided to you each week during your first year of teaching in the Bibb County School System?					

III. My employment plans for next year are... *(respond using as much space as needed, use back if necessary)*

IV. General Information

Name _____ Grade Taught _____
 Employment Period Beginning (Month/year) _____ Number of Years Experience _____