1-8-2021

Teacher Mentor and Mentee Stories: Mentorship as Opportunity for Teachers' Professional Capital and Cultural Proficiency Development

Danielle Floody

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, TEACHER MENTOR AND MENTEE STORIES: MENTORSHIP AS OPPORTUNITY FOR TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL AND CULTURAL PROFICENCY DEVELOPMENT, by DANIELLE C. FLOODY, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Education, in the College of Education & Human Development, Georgia State University.

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TEACHER MENTOR AND MENTEE STORIES: MENTORSHIP AS OPPORTUNITY FOR TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL AND CULTURAL PROFICENCY DEVELOPMENT

by

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Under the Direction of Dr. Caroline C. Sullivan

ABSTRACT

Teacher mentor and induction programs have recently gained traction over the past several decades to provide teachers new to a school a professional support system in the hope that this prevents them from leaving. However, the establishment and implementation of these programs for teachers remain inequitable, notably among schools in high-needs areas. In some schools experiencing a high rate of teacher attrition, little assistance is provided to those teachers new to the school for overcoming simple survival strategies and instead of sustaining professional growth. This study is significant because it examines and seeks to fulfill the needs of new teachers and mentor teachers via a mentorship program that honors the school culture and specific professional needs in which these teachers are working. Through a socioconstructivist lens, this qualitative narrative inquiry study investigated the mentorship experiences and needs of mentors and mentees in a diverse elementary school setting to understand their cultural proficiency, professional capital, and procedural knowledge. The data collected used semi-structured individual interviews with the mentees and mentors, the researcher's narrative beginnings, a researcher's journal. After the data was collected and analyzed, three narrative threads arose: (1) universal mentoring, (2) opportunities for cultural proficiency, and (3) professional goals. The findings of this study conclude the importance of mentorship for

retaining teachers while making further recommendations for improvements at the local and district levels.

INDEX WORDS: teacher mentors, mentees, narrative inquiry, cultural proficiency, professional capital

TEACHER MENTOR AND MENTEE STORIES: MENTORSHIP AS OPPORTUNITY FOR TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL AND CULTURAL PROFICENCY DEVELOPMENT

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DANIELLE C. FLOODY

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Education

in

Curriculum and Instruction

in

the College of Education & Human Development

Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA

2020

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my biggest supporter and other half, Jon. You allowed me to be selfish and gave me the support I needed through this entire doctoral journey. So many times, I second guessed if I was strong enough to make it to the end. However, you never doubted my capabilities and continued to remind me of my "WHY." For that I am forever grateful to have you as my life partner. I love you forever and always, Babycakes. I also dedicate this dissertation to my parents. Thank you for always supporting me on this journey. You have pushed me to want to be better, do better, and not settle in life. Because of you, I am strong and not afraid to conquer the world in front of me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I reflect on my doctoral journey I have so much to be thankful for. As cliché as it sounds, this experience has completely changed my life. When I first began this program, I had no idea the people I would come to meet, the stories I would hear, or how my own teaching practice would completely transform. I cannot put into words the love I have for this program and just how much it has impacted me. I did not walk this journey alone and for that I owe so much gratitude to those who stuck by my side and helped me along the way.

To my husband Jon, thank you for being my biggest fan and always believing in me. I am here because of you. You insisted I went back to school for my doctorate because you knew I could do it. You never once doubted me. You always believed in me even when there were times, I did not believe in myself. Thank you for giving me the space I needed to read and write so I could finish. This degree belongs to us both for your support, encouragement, and sacrifices. We made it!

To my chair, Dr. Sullivan, you are amazing. I am so blessed to have had the opportunity to work with you. Thank you for the countless hours you spent reading my work and providing me feedback (because I know it was a lot). I truly appreciated every ounce of feedback you gave me. You always knew just how to help point me in the direction I needed to go toward. Please know our Sunday coffee chats meant so much to me, especially during the pandemic. It provided me a space where I could talk through my work, but also a space to feel justified in my feelings as a teacher working through the pandemic. Thank you for being a listening ear, an advisor, and a mentor. I will cherish our time together forever.

To my committee members Dr. Many and Dr. Fernandes-Williams, thank you for sharing your wisdom and pushing me to think in ways that made me a better scholar. Your feedback and guidance got me to the end, and it does not go unnoticed.

To my parents, Debbie and Jay, I finished! The same girl that struggled her way through school growing up, finished her doctorate. I got my strong work ethic and determination from you both. Thank you for always believing in me. I love you!

Lastly, to my teacher participants, thank you for your willingness to share your stories and experiences of mentorship. Many of your stories resonated with me. Although our experiences are unique and different, I take comfort in knowing that several of our stories overlapped and have similarities. We rarely speak about their feelings or experiences as educators and your stories made me feel that I am not alone. Thank you for being vulnerable and know you have made a difference.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades in the United States education system, we have seen districts pour money into structure systems leadership believes will alleviate the teacher attrition rate. Although teacher attrition and teacher turnover are used most of the time interchangeably, it is essential to address that there are differences between them. When referring to teacher turnover, there are two categories teachers typically fall into - seeking another teaching job (movers) or seeking a non-teaching alternative (leavers) (Goddard & Goddard, 2006).

Teacher attrition refers explicitly to those teachers leaving the profession (Gallant & Riley, 2014). Many school administrators have taken notice that teachers new to a school not only need, but want, support and have provided these teachers with mentor and induction programs (Patrick, 2013). Teachers engaging in mentoring once entering the profession are essential in reducing the rate in furthering teacher burnout (De Stercke, Goyette, & Robertson, 2015). Burnout is a syndrome of physical, emotional, and cognitive exhaustion that develops from extended exposure to situations that are emotionally demanding and stressful (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). With many teachers experiencing burnout symptoms because of the environments in which they work, it is clear as to why teachers are choosing to leave the classroom.

Why Mentor Programs?

Research has shown "more than half of teachers voluntarily leave the profession for reasons other than retirement" (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2017, p. 20). The concept of mentoring is a broad professional support activity that can be perceived and developed in many ways, causing programs to vary among schools. For example, teacher mentors are described as playing the role of guiding, advising, educating, nurturing professional growth, and coaching their mentee (Ulvik & Sunde, 2013). Further, the authors explain that teacher mentors in schools are understood universally as a colleague who has experience and

supports new teachers in the first phase of their career (Ulvik & Sunde, 2013). Also, mentors focus more on solving problems for new teachers and making the job of teaching more manageable rather than the overall improvement of teaching and learning.

Unfortunately, the teacher retention rate continues to be a cause of concern in the educational field, forcing schools and districts to examine ways to prevent teachers from leaving the profession and encouraging them to stay. To alleviate the number of teachers leaving the educational field Podolsky (2017) suggests "The most effective reduction programs include mentoring, coaching, and feedback from experienced teachers in the same subject area or grade level as the novice teacher; the opportunity to observe expert teachers; orientation sessions, retreats, and seminars; and reduced workloads and extra classroom assistance" (Podolsky et al., 2017, p. 23). Catapano and Huisman (2013) describes a novice teacher as being teachers who usually have three or fewer years of teaching experience. Through the process of mentorship, the purpose is to help those teachers new to the profession develop teaching behaviors and strategies, involving a nurturing relationship between a less experienced person and a more experienced person where the mentor guides by serving as a role model and advisor (Hobson, Harris, Buckner-Manley, & Smith, 2012). One of the leading reasons beginning teachers stay in the educational profession is mentorship. An abundant amount of time and energy gets spent within a mentor relationship to facilitate the transition into the education world.

While there is little disagreement regarding the need to prevent teachers in high-needs schools from departing, there is much disagreement surrounding what is needed to keep these teachers from going. A Title I school is a school that is provided financial assistance with high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet the challenging academic content and standards (State Department of Education, 2017). This study

focuses on high-needs schools because with working at a high-needs elementary school, I have seen many teachers come and go each year further feeding into the teacher attrition rate. Each year, taxpayers lose nearly $2.2 billion to teacher migration and $2.7 billion to teacher attrition (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). Instead of spending money to hire new teachers and transfer teachers continuously, schools could invest in their current teachers, leading to more consistency and less change (Eisenschmidt, Oder, & Reiska, 2013). If we can get the teacher retention rate under control, especially in high-needs, then the positive impact on our students' learning would be tremendous (Helms-Lorenz, Van de Grift, & Maulana, 2016). For example, when schools experience high-turnover rates, it can create an unstable working environment.

Furthermore, schools experiencing high staff turnover are more likely to employ inexperienced teachers. High turnover creates instability in schools, making it more difficult to have consistent instruction among teachers. In schools that are trying to implement reforms, schools consistently hiring new teachers are more likely to repeat past mistakes, rather than improve upon implementation. High turnover can be costly, as time, effort, and support are needed to recruit and train teachers continuously. In addition to all these factors, the continuous turnover within a school can reduce student learning if more effective teachers are the ones more frequently leaving (Boyd et al., 2009). Given the retention rate situation, many schools have begun to implement a combination of academic coaches, mentoring, and induction programs for beginning or new teachers as a form of support and retention. Although each role is similar, its purpose is different.

Academic Coaching. Academic coaching, also called peer coaching, change coaching, or collegial coaching, is described today as academic coaching or instructional coaching

(Showers & Joyce, 1996). There are four main goals when providing teachers academic coaching:

(1) Improve teachers' content knowledge;

(2) actuate research-based instructional strategies in classrooms;

(3) build teachers' capacity to use a variety of assessments to monitor student understanding and achievement;

(4) engage teachers in taking an inquiry approach to teaching (Driscoll, 2008, p. 40)

Researchers Showers and Joyce (1996) found that 10% of the information presented in staff development training made it into teachers' instructional plans; however, teachers who engaged in coaching partnerships, as described above were more likely to use new ideas and strategies (Showers & Joyce, 1996). For a coaching partnership to work, collaboration is critical (Hartman, 2017). The implementation of coaching rarely looks the same across school districts. Some districts provide schools with full-time academic coaches, while other schools only receive part-time instructional coaches.

Induction. Another form of professional support for in-service teachers is an induction program that refers to "a periodic upgrade or additional training received on the job, during employment. Theoretically, induction programs are not additional training per se but are designed for teachers who have already completed basic training" (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 683). The induction process is described by Wong (2004) as a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain new teachers and seamlessly integrate them into a lifelong learning program. The objective of induction is not to provide additional training, but instead to help provide a bridge from student teacher to a teacher of students. Further, "teacher induction can refer to a

variety of different activities such as classes, workshops, orientations, seminars, and especially, mentoring" (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004, p. 29). Although induction is sometimes confused as mentoring, again, both serve different purposes.

Mentoring. Mentoring is described by Wong (2004) as a single person whose primary function is to help a new teacher. For a mentor program at a school to be successful, Wong (2004) further explains that mentors within the program should understand the mission and goals of the district. For many schools, the responsibilities of a mentor have three main categories of support: emotional, teaching, and procedural tasks (Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017). Mentoring is defined by Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2009) as "the one-to-one support of a novice or less experienced practitioner (mentee) by a more experienced practitioner (mentor), designed primarily to assist the development of the mentee's expertise and to facilitate their induction into the culture of the profession." (p. 207)

Furthermore, Mullen (2011) explains the role of a mentor is to provide new teachers with what they needed to be successful in the position. For this study, I will be using the following definition of mentoring:

the concept of mentoring can refer to acts of accompanying, respecting, collaborating, listening, and trusting in which the mentee, someone who needs assistance and support, is entrusted into the hands of a well-informed and intelligent person who can formally and confidently provide guidance and help. (Mathipa & Matlabe, 2016, p. 37)

In other words, the role of a mentor is extremely complex. Without a clear vision from the school of the responsibilities of a mentor, it can quickly become misconstrued or misunderstood. The reason I will be using this definition for mentoring for this study is

that the roles of the mentors are not clearly defined at the location in which I will be researching. Although beginning and new teachers are assigned an official mentor, these teachers may find someone else that characterizes a mentor, yet they are not formally assigned to one another.

      Length. Despite what the literature says about induction programs providing support for new teachers for the first three years, many induction and mentor programs last only a year (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Professional support for new teachers typically focuses on facilitating the first year of teaching, not for sustaining professional learning that can lead to becoming a more effective teacher (Hobson et al., 2009). Many mentor programs are only geared toward the teacher new to the educational field, and usually only within their first year of teaching. Once educators complete their first year of teaching, they are no longer considered a beginning teacher and are often exited from mentor and induction programs (Gallant & Riley, 2014). A problem that arises with new teachers no longer participating in a mentor program after one year is these educators are suddenly no longer receiving the level of support as they once did while in the program. Many of these teachers continue to need more support through a mentor and professional development to begin to improve their craft of teaching once they have managed their first year.

Apprenticeship of Observation

      Although schools may provide teacher mentor programs, there is often little professional development provided to those teachers who are selected to become mentors (Russell & Russell, 2011). Further, there is little research to study the support and professional development teacher mentors receive for their roles as mentors (Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012). Naturally, teachers selected as mentors bring their ideas and beliefs of what makes effective mentors based on their wide range of experiences. The phrase *apprenticeship of observation* is synonymous with the

claim that teachers teach as they were taught (Lortie, 1975). For example, it is the idea that teachers base their practices on imitation of their teachers, which, being generalized across individuals, becomes "tradition" and "transcends generations" (Lortie, 1975, p. 63).

Through our social interactions and experiences with others, Vygotsky (1978) suggests that this is how new knowledge is constructed. Mentorship lends itself to the idea that teachers, too, learn from one another. Furthermore, Darling-Hammond (2003) argues that an advantage to teacher mentor programs is that veteran teachers can continuously learn from teaching their mentees. By becoming a mentor teacher, veteran teachers are provided with the opportunity to collaborate and sharpen their craft of teaching to mitigate stagnancy within the profession. Through researching the perspectives of mentor teachers while mentoring their student interns, Russell and Russell (2011), found that many of the teacher mentors expressed feelings of excitement and motivation while working with their mentee due to the opportunity to both share and gain new ideas. Although the mentors were excited to work with their intern, the study found the participants voiced a need for workshops to help prepare them for the mentoring role (Russell & Russell, 2011). Teacher mentors need (more) quality training to support effective mentoring practices (Hobbs & Stovall, 2015). The job of a teacher mentor is complicated (Hobbs & Stovall, 2015), because there is no *one size fits all* model for preparing mentors or those teachers (Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012) in the mentor programs. Based on the experiences mentor teachers bring with them, it is difficult to determine what type of training each person would need. Depending on the individual, their perception of the term mentor, the district/school guidelines, the person's role, and responsibility can vary significantly.

Mentoring should be based on the needs of the individuals involved in the mentorship, the mentee's needs, and the resources available, but used in conjunction with

the induction programs that may be offered through the districts and schools (Wong, 2004). For teachers to receive the benefits of both the mentor and induction program, programs must not be used synonymously with one another. For example, in many school districts, teachers experience induction when they are new to that district. The induction program is often one or two days in the summer before the school year begins at the county or district level. Rather than providing continuous ongoing support throughout the year for those new to the district, the initial induction is often more of a welcome to the school district rather than a form of professional development. With mentoring and induction programs both aiming to support those teachers new to both the profession and to a school with the tools needed to be successful, it is easy to see why the terms can become confusing. Although induction and mentoring are sometimes interchangeably used, the implementation of these two programs within many districts tends to be very different.

> Duration and intensity are one set of variables; mentoring programs can vary from a single meeting between mentor and protégés at the beginning of a school year to a highly structured program involving frequent meetings over a couple of years between mentors and protégés who are provided with time away from their normal teaching schedules. (Ingersoll, 2004, p. 30)

In other words, although mentor programs are typically implemented in all schools to some degree, the level of support provided to a mentee varies depending on the individual school's mentor program. It is essential to recognize, however, that if both induction and mentor programs are used effectively and with consistency, they can provide teachers with a support system for navigating their way through the educational world.

My New Teacher Beginning

Similar to the previously described context of mentorship, my interest in mentorship began as a novice teacher when I was assigned my first mentor. The mentor that I was provided as a beginning teacher was at the other end of the hall, thus inhibiting us from interacting very much with one another. With no formal mentor program or time frame, getting in touch with my mentor was up to me to figure out. When we did meet up, I struggled with knowing what help I needed, combined with the constant overwhelming feeling of teaching at a high-needs elementary school. I was overwhelmed like many new teachers in schools like mine.

As a novice teacher with less than three years of teaching experience, I did not know what to ask for just because I did not know to ask it, which inevitably led to a feeling of worthlessness and inadequacy. Most of my days were spent eating lunch in my classroom, with the other two novice teachers crying together and trying to figure out how we were going to survive the rest of the school days. My mentor provided as much help as she could, but the help mainly consisted of "*survival tactics*" or advice to just "*get through this year.*" Much the information she provided was to help me *"just survive this year, and things will get better.*" I remember wondering if I was cut out for this profession and if I could make it through the year. Not much of the help I received from my mentor was beneficial as substantive professional support as it was mainly short-term advice to put out the many fires that I experienced in my classroom.

As a White, female teacher whose students were primarily Black or Hispanic, I needed support and guidance on how to meet the diverse cultural, academic, and social needs of my students. With research currently showing 88% of the teacher population is White and female (Love, 2019), teachers have to prepare for how to become culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) as it is not likely they will teach students like themselves or who have similar life

experiences. Zozakiewicz (2010) further discloses a cultural divide between students and teachers, which causes teachers to be lacking culturally relevant practices. Even more, as the diversity of students within our schools continue to grow, the demographics of most of our educators remain unchanged (Zozakiewicz, 2010). "Currently, of the nearly 50 million students enrolled in public schools in this country, almost 48% are African Americans and Hispanics, a marked change in this population over the past five years" (Thomas-Alexander & Harper, 2017, p. 49).

Although my mentor tried to help to provide help and assistance to me where she could, much of the support came through a deficit lens. For example, when I became overwhelmed by the number of students that were performing below grade level in my reading and math class, she told me to do the best I could, but focusing on those students that had a chance of passing the end of year assessment. She further explained that many of these students did not have support from home, and therefore we can only do so much. When I asked about tips regarding communication with parents, I was told not to expect much from the parents because they were not involved. Little did I know these little comments and pieces of advice she gave to me planted seeds that would later grow into viewing certain groups of students through a deficit lens and further perpetuate negative stereotypes.

An example of this cultural divide is described by Bettina Love (2019) through the idea of the teacher education gap (Love, 2019) in which preservice teachers may enter the field of education as novices with preconceived notions of dark children (Love, 2019). Love further articulates common myths such as, "future teachers learn that dark children are in trauma, dark children are 'at risk,' dark children are 'underprivileged,' dark children fall into the achievement gap, and dark communities are underserved" (Love, 2019, pp. 127-128). Many teachers, like me,

enter the teaching field, having little understanding of their students whom they will be teaching nor how many schools fail individual children. Unfortunately, many veteran teachers pass judgment on or stereotype their students and families; for example, by saying parents do not care when they are challenging to get in contact with (Love, 2019). When new teachers are assigned to mentors with these views, it perpetuates a cycle of judgment and stereotypes of certain groups of children. Thus, if a school does not have a mentor or induction program that places an importance on social justice and equity, negative views of the students and the surrounding community may perpetuate. Although there are some systems in place to support educators with teaching in schools with diverse students, there is much room for improvement among these programs.

During my first year, there was a constant feeling of isolation and needing help to reach and establish relationships with my students, but not getting the support I felt that I could use because I did not know how or what to ask. And because I was a typical novice, I had no idea where the disconnect was. Without knowing how to support my diverse student population culturally, academically, and socially, I found it difficult to provide my students with an environment in which they could flourish. The advice I received from veteran teachers made me look at my students with deficit views rather than the potential they each held. Looking back, the guidance that I received that year was meant to help me *survive* in this profession but not to thrive or grow into a culturally competent educator. I had been given merely only a life raft to help me stay afloat for that year; however, I was not provided with the swim lessons I desperately needed to grow in this profession.

Culturally Relevant Mentoring

There is a false belief that schools will fix the problems our children face when they are only perpetuating them further (Love, 2019). Teachers within the schools need to be aware of how to mitigate the system rather than letting the system create further inequalities (Love, 2019). The *educational survival complex* is an idea Love (2019) discusses "where students are left learning to merely survive, learning how schools mimic the worlds they live in, thus making schools a training site for a life of exhaustion" (p. 27). Like the students in many high-needs areas, teachers are also left to learn to merely survive. Despite the prevalence of a need for social justice, of a group of 41 school administrators in Ontario, an overwhelming number of over 30 administrators placed the most significant emphasis on classroom management/organization, teaching/learning to address learner differences, and curriculum/policy knowledge for their new teachers (Pinto et al., 2012b). This calls attention to the lack of instruction and limited social justice within the curriculum among new teachers.

Furthermore, there is research surrounding equitable mentoring practices, but little studies examine the implementation of those equitable mentoring practices. For example, a mentor may discuss with their mentee how they treat all their students fairly but may be unaware of how the school system works to disadvantage some while privileging others (Barrett, Solomon, Singer, Portelli, & Mujuwamariya, 2009). This type of mentoring only further contributes to societal inequities. The importance of developing an understanding of the school and district's culture is just as significant for the mentee as lesson planning (Catapano & Huisman, 2013). This will create the opportunity for teachers to examine further issues of equity and social justice and how it relates explicitly to the students at their school.

In addition to culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) for classroom teachers, these ideas extend to mentorship. The term *culturally relevant pedagogy* (CRP) is defined as "an effective pedagogical practice that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their culture identify while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools perpetuate" (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Furthermore, Zozakiewicz (2010) advocates that a *culturally responsible mentor* (CRM) must model how to be culturally aware and learn to reflect on their mentorship practices. This approach to providing novice teachers with a culturally responsible mentor can help to improve teaching practices by better addressing diverse students' learning needs and improve communication. To provide mentees with the support they need to become more culturally aware, Zozakiewicz (2010) suggests professional development should allow more mentors to become culturally responsible so that they can adequately assist their mentees when learning how to meet the needs of their diverse students. The journey to be a culturally responsive teacher is an ongoing journey of learning to become critical and culturally aware, which means the process is never truly finished (Zozakiewicz, 2010). Thus, culturally responsible mentors acknowledge and explain how cultural positions change and why it matters. For example, as a mentor, this includes having discussions about race and how it applies to the classroom. Ladson-Billings (1995) stresses the idea of (CRP) as the importance of including students' cultural backgrounds, interests, and lived experiences in all aspects of education and learning within the classroom and across the school. Although culturally responsible mentoring is a branch of culturally relevant teaching, both urge the job of mentors to help their mentees realize they have a responsibility to the diverse students and families in which they serve (Zozakiewicz, 2010).

A Product of my Environment

After a few years of teaching, I was assigned as a mentor to both a new teacher and a student intern in my school. Teachers who are selected to mentor others most often are chosen by the administration because of their years of experience or academic success (Hobbs & Stovall, 2015). However, I was not selected for the position because of my teaching experience or academic achievement, but rather because of the nine teachers on my grade level that year, I was one of the three who were returning. Research has consistently shown that many teachers in the U.S., especially those working in high-need areas, resign in their first five years of teaching, thus causing an adverse effect for schools and students (Dunn, Deroo, & VanDerHeide, 2017; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The term *revolving door effect* is used by Ingersoll (2004) to describe the frustrating cycle that occurs at at-risk schools that must continually search for replacement teachers.

In some cases, it may be more challenging to fill the position because of the time of year or the credentials needed causing the school to find it challenging to hire a replacement. When schools are continuously dealing with teacher turnover, it creates an atmosphere of instability and negatively impacts teacher quality (Dunn et al., 2017). For example, schools that experience higher attrition also tend to experience lower teacher effectiveness due to the constant rotation of new staff (Redding & Henry, 2019).

With no experience ever mentoring another teacher, I quickly fell back on my experience as a new teacher and the mentoring I had received, which was meant for survival and not provide growth in this profession. These "default options," which I fell back upon from my apprenticeship of observation, had offered me a set of strategies that I could fall back on when uncertain about how to proceed pedagogically (Lortie, 1975). I found myself reinforcing low expectations for students performing below grade level because that was what I was taught. "It is

particularly crucial that mentors be chosen carefully based upon both their pedagogical strengths and belief systems" (Thomas-Alexander & Harper, 2017, p. 50). I began to mentor the way that I was mentored. For example, I explained to my student teacher and mentee not to expect much parent involvement, much like my mentor had told me. I also further reinforced deficit views of students that were performing below grade level by saying those students were unable or because it may be too difficult rather than allowing them to attempt it and supporting them with scaffolding. Just as my mentor had done to me, I began to plant the seeds for my student teacher and mentee to adopt deficit thinking and negative stereotypical views of their current and future students.

Consequently, some mentors are perceived experts regardless of their views and perpetuate poor teachers. It may also prevent a collaborative relationship. In a study by Keogh, Dole, and Hudson (2006), the researchers examined the way mentor teachers positioned themselves as "experts" and how they regarded their preservice teachers as "un-experienced." When mentors position themselves as experts, it can create a dominant model (Patrick, 2013) of mentoring rather than a collaborative model. For a mentorship to be successful, collaboration practices are a vital factor to include among the pairing. When a mentorship provides both the mentor and mentee with the opportunity to collaborate, both participants can gain ideas from one another, creating a sense of belonging and a feeling of their opinions being of value.

Despite the importance of the role that teacher mentors play in the shaping of their mentees' learning, not all teacher mentoring is beneficial to those involved. Thomas-Alexander and Harper (2017) examined the beliefs of mentor teachers concerning the urban schools in which they worked and found that many of the mentors within the study lacked confidence when working with students within the urban schools. The mentors articulated feeling unprepared to

work with their diverse students leading to an overwhelmingly negative outlook of the students. Many of the mentors also made over-generalized and deficit comments about urban schools and the students they taught. These teacher mentors were not likely to articulate a positive view of urban schools, thus creating a negative perception for the mentee teachers to adopt as their own. Rather than articulating the challenges that arise within urban schools to their mentees, Thomas-Alexander and Harper (2017) suggest the mentors should view these as opportunities of growth to give their mentees the chance to see a positive view. Overall, the professional development teachers typically receive focuses heavily on learning the content and understanding test scores. However, with constant growth, usually in the diversity of the student population, further improvement toward teacher preparation in understanding culturally relevant practices need to be made (Thomas-Alexander & Harper, 2017).

In addition to challenges with diversity, not all mentorship research is positive. Some research shows that mentors can unknowingly negatively influence their mentees' beliefs, especially those teachers working in urban or low-income areas (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). With only five years of experience, I was considered a veteran teacher, yet I hardly felt that way. I found myself very frustrated as a mentor at times because although I was assigned to mentor both a novice teacher and a student intern, I quickly realized I struggled to understand what they needed. As a mentor, I constantly battled with the idea that I was giving too much information to my mentee and overwhelming her. I wanted the teachers that I mentored to have access to as much information as possible to help them adjust to their new school and life as a teacher. However, I constantly grappled with the feeling that perhaps the quantity of information was more harmful than helpful. Maybe it caused more stress than support. With my student intern, I found that our relationship was more of a dominant mentoring model (Patrick, 2013) rather than

a collaborative model because of my view that she was "inexperienced." In a study examining the influence supervisor teachers have over their preservice teachers during their mentorship experience concluded that mentors not only influence preservice teachers, but they have complex and significant power over preservice teachers (Anderson, 2007). For example, mentor teachers' "lack of awareness of their power" and failure to know that their preservice mentee "wanted to be taught" resulted in the mentors' failure to "maximize the learning opportunities of student teachers" (Anderson, 2007, p. 321).

Without understanding the power and potential influence I held as a mentor, I found myself giving them both survival tips. That is what my mentor had done for me. My first experience as a mentor quickly became a mentality which reinforced the long-gained reputation that teaching is this occupation that "cannibalizes its young" in which the initiation of the new teachers is like "sink or swim," "trial by fire," or a "boot camp experience" (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 682). My mentorship based on my experiences both as a teacher and former mentee had become a cliché. This further demonstrated the importance of mentors needing to rebel against the mentality of every person for themselves and create a mentorship atmosphere that is collaborative and inviting. With no formal professional development training in mentorship, I had used my learned experiences to help guide my role as a mentor. After that first year of mentoring, I realized just how little I had supported the teachers I mentored. Thus, I began my reflections on ways to make changes for the next time I mentored an intern or new teacher. While we know that mentors are more likely to employ effective mentoring when they are prepared for the role, mentor preparation is rather sparse and underdeveloped (Hobson et al., 2009). Further research needs to provide professional development training for mentors to support novice teachers (Russell & Russell, 2011). Although there are systems in place to

support mentors, each school and district is different, leaving room for improvement among these programs.

Stopping the Revolving Door

Despite the lack of development, I received as a mentor combined with the constant questioning of how to serve those new teachers best, I am currently in charge of the mentorship program at my school. Although there has been a mentorship program in place for the past several years, there is room for improvement at this program; further, it has no formal outline or requirements to follow other than a mentor/mentee handbook that our principal gave to us as the directors of the mentor program (see Appendix A). When I took the task of directing the program on at the end of last year, I began with high hopes of making changes to create a more reliable mentorship program for teachers new to our school. However, those high hopes were quickly met with unexpected hiccups along the way, thus making changes to the program difficult. For starters, my school experienced roughly 25-30 teachers leaving or transferring to other schools, reinforcing the idea of the *revolving door effect* (Ingersoll, 2004). With so many teachers going, it created a problem in some grade levels where there were more new teachers than current teachers. Unfortunately, we had to assign more than one new teacher to each mentor. Rather than choosing teachers based on their philosophical approach or teaching practices, mentor teachers were chosen based on eligibility on the grade level, just like my first mentoring experience.

Another problem I ran into while leading this mentor program was time conflict. To provide new teachers with longer than a 30-minute meeting time, as in the previous years, our principal moved the new teacher meeting to once a month after school on a Tuesday. The monthly Tuesday meeting provides us with an hour to meet; however, the mentors are unable to attend because they have other sessions at the same time. So, without regular meeting times with their mentors, there is a programming problem for these monthly meetings as I must meet the

wide range of needs of all the new teachers. Their level of experience comprises 0 to 20+ years, and I struggle to use these monthly meetings to help our new teachers grow professionally and not just learn how to survive the year. The county provides training for the lead mentor of the school to attend; however, I am unable to participate in those trainings or obtain a copy of the materials.

Nevertheless, with no curriculum or formal guidelines regarding how to structure the mentorship program at our school, I am building the program as we need it. Because I want to do more than provide these new teachers with survival tips, I am interested in understanding the mentorship experiences and needs of both the mentors and mentees in a diverse elementary school setting. This study used narrative inquiry to examine both the mentor and mentees' cultural proficiency, procedural knowledge, and professional capital. Narrative inquiry is defined as "an approach to the study lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 17). Using narrative inquiry, I examined my experience and those teachers participating in a mentorship program.

Bigger than Mentorship

As the stretch toward the end of my first year as lead mentor, the world was hit by the unfortunate circumstances of the pandemic. With little to no information on how this pandemic affected children, schools began to close their doors and people were ordered to stay at home. For the last three months of school I navigated teaching through a computer screen with no time to prepare and with the constant challenges of reaching students. Many of my students did not have access to devices or internet making teaching digitally difficult. Digital learning felt isolating because the only people I saw were the handful of students that showed up to my Zoom meetings and my grade level once a week. After about a month of digital learning I and the other lead mentors planned a Zoom meeting for the mentees as a way to check-in with them. We had

no formal plan for the meeting, but we wanted to still find a way to host our mentee meetings. Hosting that meeting brought some sense of normalcy. We sat on Zoom for almost two hours talking with each other and catching up. We quickly realized the mentee teachers missed interacting with each other just as much as we did and having that taken away during the pandemic was taking a toll on all of us.

When school ended, I spoke to my principal about making changes to the mentorship program going into year two of rebuilding the program. For starters, I wanted to allow those teachers that wanted to mentor to volunteer versus being selected by administration. My principal agreed and I sent out a form to the teachers asking for any teacher that was interested in becoming a mentor in the upcoming school year. I received seven responses. Although I was happy a few teachers volunteered to mentor, we were still short four mentors which meant administration had to assign the remaining few. The other change to the mentor program I spoke to my principal about receiving support from the district mentor office. My principal scheduled a meeting with the district mentoring office so we could find out what resources they could offer our program.

However, during that meeting I learned each school has a lead mentor enrolled in the district's mentor program which grants them access to the district's mentoring materials. When I explained to the district representative that our school did not have anyone enrolled in the program due to prior engagements, she explained we did not have access to the materials to help keep the integrity of the program intact. I felt that all the materials from the district should be provided to every school, especially those with a high number of teachers leaving each year and it was inequitable to not offer the material to every school.

Nevertheless, I enrolled in the program so my school could receive the materials. I then requested the district representative come out to our school and host a professional development assisting the mentors and mentees at the beginning of the year deal with the trauma of the pandemic of the spring. However, as I entered the fall semester and school began, the district representative never reached out to me. Thus, leaving me to enter my second year as a lead mentor to try to navigate building the mentor program all while teaching both digital and in person students during the ongoing pandemic. Not much has changed, our mentor meetings still meet monthly and the mentors do not attend because of their prior engagements. I have taken on the responsibility of the grade chair because our grade chair had to take a level of absence. As the person on the grade level with the most experience, the administration suggested I take on the position only to later find out the grade chair meetings meet on the same day as the mentor meetings. I have come to learn mentorship is not viewed as important in my school or within my district but rather an afterthought or a box that can be checked. I have also come to realize helping teacher turnover goes much deeper than mentorship programs but rather is a broken system of inequitable injustices that are continuously swept under a rug.

Research Questions

The research question guiding this study is: What are the mentorship experiences and needs of mentors and mentee teachers in a diverse elementary school setting?

Purpose

The purpose of my study is to bring awareness to the needs of both mentor and mentee teachers in a mentor program and co-construct the program to build their professional capital within education (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Through a socioconstructivist lens, this qualitative narrative inquiry allowed me to understand multiple perspectives but also consider how other individuals acquire knowledge. Approaching this study with narrative inquiry allowed

for my participants and myself to co-construct and understand our mentorship stories. Using narrative inquiry, my participants shared personal experiences with mentorship and their use of social justice and equity in their classrooms. The mentors and mentees shared their experiences with mentorship and cultural proficiency for continued growth in this profession. Sharing their experiences and perspectives provides valuable feedback for change on their own campus at at the district level which others may find valuable as well when considering the structure of mentorship programs.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to shine a light on the experiences of mentors and mentees in a mentor program, especially in schools with high attrition rates which tend to be in high needs areas. It is no secret that many mentor programs have a successful record. Many of those success stories come from programs with teachers who volunteer to mentor, have one to one pairing on the same grade level or subject, or with the schools providing the mentors a stipend. However, with the variation of programs implemented not only between states, districts, and schools, successful models of some schools may not work for others in a different context. For schools that have consistently high attrition rates, mentor programs can provide a form of support for new teachers by creating cultural proficient leaders if implemented to meet the needs of the culture of that school. Mentorship can provide new teachers with the professional support by fostering the professional capital they need for long-term sustainable growth within the education profession.

Overview of the Study

This study consists of four more chapters, followed by a reference and appendices section. Chapter 2 is the literature review, where I discuss research related to teacher mentoring and theory relevant to social constructivism. Chapter 3 consists of a discussion of the

methodology narrative inquiry, the data collection, and analysis methods. In Chapter 4, I describe my methodology of narrative inquiry, my data collection, and data analysis process. Lastly, in Chapter 5 interpret the findings from the study through narrative threads and provide proposed changes to the mentorship programs at both the local and district level.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of mentees and mentors in a diverse elementary school setting with professional capital, procedural knowledge, and cultural proficiency. This chapter first provides the conceptual and theoretical framework, as well as the historical overview of mentoring. Next, the chapter carefully examines various characteristics of teacher mentoring concerning techniques mentors use with their mentees. Finally, this chapter focuses on different mentoring models both within the United States and internationally.

Conceptual Framework

In the United States, reforms are built on quick fixes with each silver bullet missing its designed target. The improvement of education cannot be about the quick-fire changes, but instead, we must focus on developing a teacher's professional capital.

Professional Capital

It is estimated that 40-50% of teachers leave teaching within the first five years of initial employment. Even more specifically, the teacher attrition rate in high-needs schools across the U.S. is about 20 percent per the calendar year— roughly 50 percent higher than the rate in more affluent schools. Many reasons influence an educators' decision in leaving the profession that includes: burnout (Buchanan et al., 2013; Goddard & Goddard, 2006), lack of support for new teachers (Buchanan et al., 2013; Ingersoll, 2004), and working conditions (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011). Working conditions can be further detailed into discipline issues, lack of administrative support, and negative school cultures (Ewing & Manuel, 2005). To prevent further teacher attrition, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) promote *professional capital,* which could potentially transform education for the better by describing specific beneficial skills, dispositions, and networked structures that educators possess and develop as professionals. Three types of capital make up professional capital: human, social, and decisional. Each of these three types of capital

is important, and Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) explain that for a teacher to develop professional capital, they must develop their human, social, and decisional capital. Furthermore, in order to develop high-quality teachers and teaching, Fullan and Hargreaves (2012) state that this means "requiring teachers to be highly committed, thoroughly prepared, continuously developed, properly paid, well networked with each other to maximize their own improvement, and able to make effective judgments together using all their capabilities and experience (p.2).

Human Capital

Human capital is defined in teaching as having and developing the requisite knowledge and skills of the profession (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 89). For example, it is about teachers understanding the subjects and how to teach those subjects, but also knowing the diverse students in which they teach in their classroom. Teachers who developed human capital understand the cultural differences and diverse needs of their students. These teachers are also committed to serving all children and believe they must continuously learn to grow as an educator.

Social Capital

Social capital is defined in teaching as enabling teachers to learn from each other within and across schools – and building cultures and networks of communication, learning, trust, and collaboration around the teaching team as well (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 89). This means that the quantity and quality of interactions and how people build social relationships affect their ability to access and obtain knowledge and information (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). For example, a behavior shapes easier when in a group rather than individually. For teachers, if they are provided with a strong support group with a sense of expectations, it will build trust and therefore reinforcing positive behaviors. The more teachers develop their social capital through

collaboration, the more their human capital increases. However, if there is a weak social capital, then this leads to teachers feeling isolated, which in turn does not allow teachers to learn from others.

Decisional Capital

Lastly, the third type of capital needed to obtain professional capital is decisional capital. Decision capital is defined as the ability to make discretionary judgments in a professional setting (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 93). This means if a teacher continually refers to a lesson plan as a script or must seek approval from a supervisor before making decisions, then that teacher has not yet developed decisional capital. Decisional capital is acquired through experiences. To further enhance decisional capital, professionals draw on the experiences of their colleagues to provide them insight when making decisions. The quantity and quality of social capital directly affect the teacher's decisional capital. Teachers who have developed decisional capital increase their ability to make informed decisions based on experience rather than making poor judgments and ineffective practices.

Building professional capital is not a simple task and takes work, but the benefits can impact both teachers and students in ways unimaginable. To further reinforce the development of professional capital, Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) establish the five Cs to becoming highly effective: (1) capability (or expertise), (2) commitment, (3) career, (4) culture, and (5) context or conditions of teaching (p. 46). For a teacher to be successful within the profession, all five conditions need to be working together to create an atmosphere in which a teacher can thrive. However, if just one of the conditions is weak, then the others will suffer.

The first of the five Cs is capability. Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) define it as the skills and qualities that lead to accomplishments – build confidence (p. 55). For example, when a

teacher is provided with the tools needed to be successful, it not only raises their confidence to believe they can perform better but also that their students can perform better. The second of the five Cs is commitment. Not only can a commitment be a moral value, but it can also be an emotional state. A teacher's commitment can become affected by both their work and school life. When building professional capital, capability and commitment are mutual in which they both go together. A teacher is more likely to demonstrate commitment if they are feeling confident and making accomplishments. The third of the five Cs is career. Within this stage, Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) explain to understand a teacher; it is incredibly important to understand who the person is. For example, it can be particularly helpful to understand what stage a teacher is at within their career. A teacher new to teaching is going to have very different needs than a teacher that has been in the profession for several years. The fourth of the five Cs is culture.

People must be exposed to other cultures than their own to help them grow both personally and professionally. Interacting and collaborating with people with different cultural backgrounds provide a person the opportunity to be more open to change. Providing more exposure to various cultures also allows people to understand multiple perspectives. The last of the five Cs is conditions and quality. Professional capital is strengthened by high-quality peer interactions among professionals. The peer interactions must be of high-quality because if not, what their colleagues may share could be bad practices rather than knowledge for professional growth. If teachers can invest in developing all the components of their professional capital the benefits could completely transform education by creating more highly qualified teachers who collaborate and work to meet the needs of their diverse student population.

Cultural Proficiency

Cultural proficiency is a model for shifting the culture within the school or district. It is a mindset or the assumptions a person or an organization makes when describing or responding to

an issue in a diverse setting. For some people, cultural proficiency is a paradigm shift from viewing cultural differences as problematic and with deficit views to valuing cultural differences as an asset to the educational experience (Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2019). According to the authors, to become culturally proficient, it requires a person to be valuable, curious, humble, courageous, open, and reflective (Lindsey et al., 2019). The framework of cultural proficiency (See Figure 1) offers a continuum to distinguish from unhealthy to healthy behaviors regarding a person's beliefs with other cultures. This conceptual framework will be used to determine the level of cultural proficiency the mentor and mentee teachers must establish the changes that may need to be made in the future to the mentor program to help all teachers move toward becoming culturally proficient.

The Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Practices

The Five Essential Elements of Cultural Competence
Serve as standards for personal, professional values and behaviors as well as organizational policies and practices:

- Assessing Cultural Knowledge
- Valuing Diversity
- Managing the Dynamics of Difference
- Adapting to Diversity
- Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum portrays people and organizations who possess the knowledge, skills, and moral bearing to distinguish among healthy and unhealthy practices as represented by different worldviews:

One that depicts unhealthy practices:	Differing World Views	*One that depicts healthy practices:*
- Cultural Destructiveness - Cultural Incapacity - Cultural Blindness		- Cultural Precompetence - Cultural Competence - Cultural Proficiency

Resolving the tension to do what is socially just within our diverse society led people and organization to view selves in terms Unhealthy and Healthy

Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

Serve as personal, professional, and institutional impediments to moral and just service to a diverse society by being:

- Resistant to change,
- Unaware of the need to adapt,
- Not acknowledging systemic oppression, and
- Benefiting from a sense of privilege & entitlement.

Ethical Tension

Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency
Provide a moral framework for conducting one's self and organization in an ethical fashion by believing that:

- Culture is a predominant force in society,
- People served in varying degrees by dominant culture,
- People have individual and group identities,
- Diversity within cultures is vast and significant,
- Each cultural group has unique
- cultural needs, and
- The best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all.
- The family, as defined by each culture, is the primary system of support in the education of children.
- School systems must recognize that marginalized populations have to be at least bicultural and that this status creates a unique set of issues to which the system must be equipped to respond.
- Inherent in cross-cultural interactions are dynamics that must be acknowledged, adjusted to, and accepted.
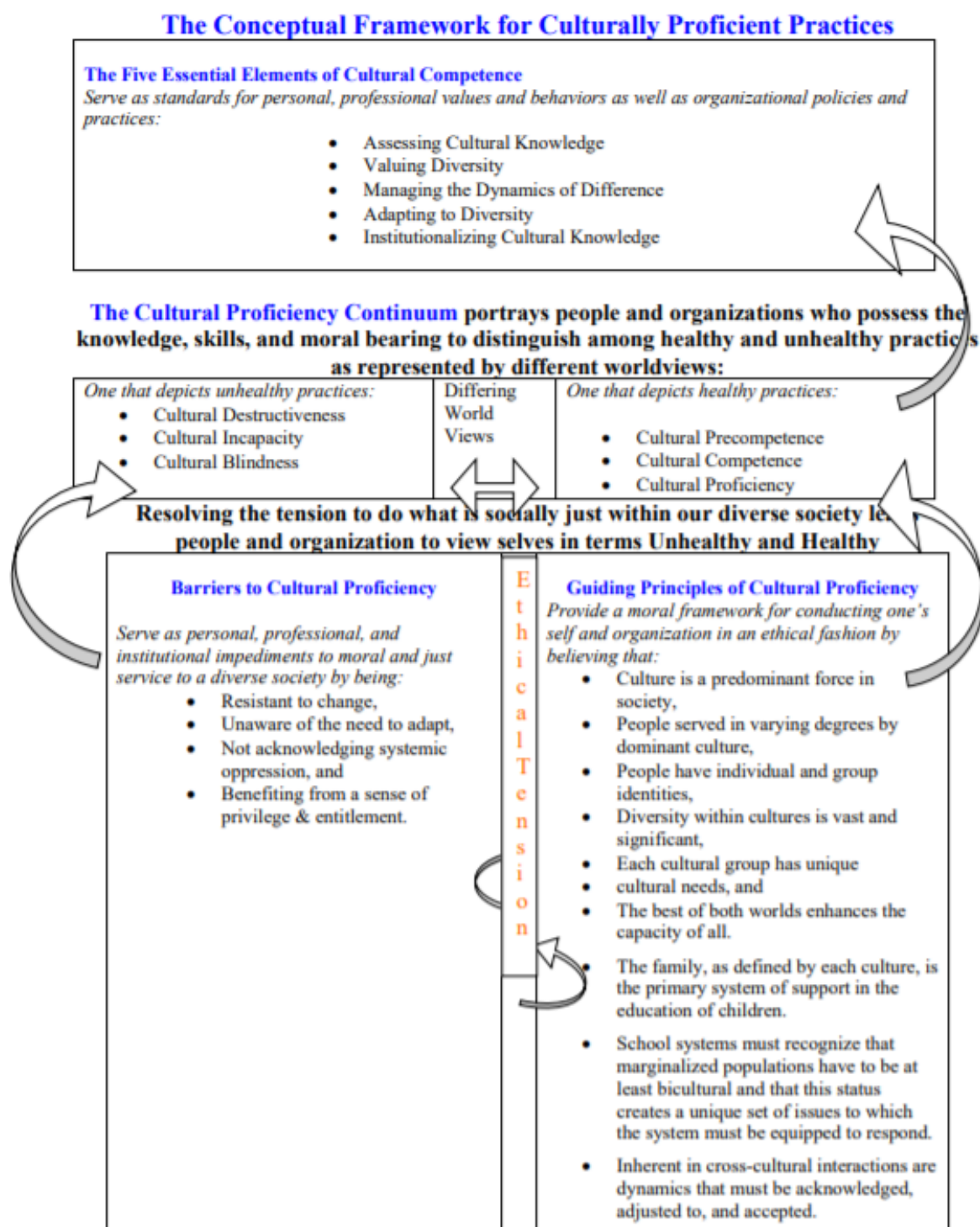
Figure 1: Conceptual framework for culturally proficient practices adapted from (Brion, 2019)

The continuum is comprised of six phases: cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural precomptence, cultural competence and cultural proficiency (Lindsey et al., 2019). The continuum can be used as an assessment tool to assess where an individual or organization is on the continuum based on educators' expressed values and behaviors and schools' enacted policies and practices.

The first three points described are composed of unhealthy values, behaviors, and policies:

- *Cultural Destructiveness* is characterized by individuals who see the differences in cultures and seek to eliminate them. Cultural destructiveness often involves macro aggressions with extreme examples being genocides and slavery.

- *Cultural Incapacity* is portrayed by extreme bias and belief of superiority of one's cultures and beliefs. An example can be White supremacy, the belief that being White is inherently better than any other race.

- *Cultural Blindness* is when people see the cultural differences and dismiss them. In this phase, people often say things like: "Color does not exist" or "I do not see colors, I only see and teach students."

The following three points represent healthy behaviors and values toward demonstrating cultural proficiency:

- *Cultural Precompetence* is when people recognize what they don't know. This phase is about the awareness of one's limitations when interacting with other cultures. An example could be hearing teachers say: "We are trying to teach the students and reach their diverse needs, but unsure of how to adapt to the new demographics."

- *Cultural Competence* is when people see the differences; understand, accept, and respect those differences. An example could be when leaders adopt culturally relevant leadership and curriculum, advocate for changes in policies etc.

- *Cultural Proficiency* is when people respond positively and affirmingly to differences, advocate, and always learn. An example would be utilizing the school to interact with colleagues, students, and the community to advocate for lifelong learners for all cultural groups.

Educators, leaders, schools, and districts need to develop and implement practices that are inclusive to all cultures rather than allow a system to reinforce further negative or deficit views or certain groups of students. By understanding where the mentor and mentee teachers are within the six levels of cultural proficiency it will help provide knowledge of how to incorporate what teachers need to continue to move forward in becoming culturally proficient.

Procedural Tasks

There is no doubt that mentor programs play an integral part in developing teachers' professional activities. Zembytska (2016) claims that the objective of teacher mentor programs is to help those teachers new to a school or district transition into their new roles. One goal of mentoring programs is to make sure new teachers have an auspicious beginning teaching experience (Mullen, 2011). Thus, mentorship programs should be sufficiently supported such that those newly beginning teachers in hopes that these teachers will remain in the profession. New teachers entering the field of education need additional support to help them adjust to the demands of the job. For example, procedural tasks like lesson planning, classroom management, and scheduling are among the most common tasks new teachers need assistance with when entering the educational field. However, given the constant shift of curriculum, pedagogical practices, and school cultures within the educational profession, veteran teachers can also benefit

from mentoring. Rodgers and Skelton (2014) explain that by setting up an effective mentor program such as team teaching and establishing a rapport with other colleagues can result in fewer teachers leaving the profession. Further research shows that teachers participating in a mentor relationship with other teachers are less likely to change schools or leave teaching early in their careers (Hall, Hughes, & Thelk, 2017).

New teachers may feel overwhelmed, and underprepared experienced educators may encounter teacher burnout, which describes the feeling of being dissatisfied with the responsibilities of teaching (Bressman, Winter, & Efron, 2018). Several reasons leading teachers to a feeling of exasperation and dissatisfaction within the teaching profession are: being overwhelmed in teaching, the challenge of classroom management, the feeling of being isolated when teaching, and a lack of a strong mentoring system (Bennett, Brown Jr, Kirby-Smith, & Severson, 2013). Effective mentoring before and immediately upon entering the teaching profession is essential in reducing the rate of further teacher burnout (De Stercke et al., 2015). Although an inadequate mentoring experience was a reason for some novice teachers to leave teaching, alternatively, Bennett et al. (2013) found that other novice teachers stayed in education because of the support they received by their mentors and other colleagues.

Theoretical Framework

This qualitative research study draws on the social constructivist tenet of epistemology. Epistemology is understood as the theory of knowledge. Crotty (2003) asserts that epistemology "involves knowledge, therefore, and embodies a certain understanding of what is entailed in knowing, that is *how we know what we know*" (p. 8). Epistemology is the individual lens through which people view the world (Egbert & Sanders, 2014). The notion of wearing a single lens to view the world means that people experience things differently based on a variety of factors. Socioeconomic, cultural, professional experiences, and family backgrounds (Egbert & Sanders,

2014) are just a few examples of contextual factors that influence a person's lens. Recognizing one's epistemology is essential in the realm of research because, within the social constructivist paradigm, it can allow the researcher to understand multiple perspectives but also consider how other individuals acquire knowledge (Egbert & Sanders, 2014).

This study situates itself within constructionism. Crotty (2003) defines constructionism as "all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of the interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 42). Therefore, knowledge is constructed through personal experiences and interactions rather than measured through experiments (Egbert & Sanders, 2014). Social constructionists believe that knowledge may be built in different ways by different people, even when experiencing the same phenomenon (Crotty, 2003). Furthermore, Crotty (2003) described constructivism as an epistemological view of discovering meaning. Through social interactions, knowledge becomes constructed. Vygotsky first introduced the term *social constructivism* (Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivism is how new knowledge develops through social interactions and personal to every person's experience (Vygotsky, 1978) in a teaching and learning situation. Hence the process of mentoring and collaborating with others to build on knowledge aligns with social constructivism as a theoretical framework for this qualitative study using narrative inquiry. How the mentees experience this phenomenon of co-constructing, the mentor program will be different based on their lens (Egbert & Sanders, 2014) through the filtering of their experiences and needs.

Historical Overview of Mentoring

Mentoring has a long history of success. Its origination begins some 3,500 years ago with *The Odyssey*. As the story goes, a wise elderly friend named Mentor was entrusted by Odysseus to educate his son, Telemachus. During the time they spent together, Mentor became

Telemachus' teacher, counselor, and protector by building a relationship based on affection and trust. From this story emerged the idea of mentoring as a "powerful interaction between an older and younger person, a relationship in which the older member is trust, loving, and experienced, in guidance of the younger" (Merriam, 1983, p. 162). As a field and profession, education has adopted this concept of mentoring in hopes that it will provide teachers with a similar supportive experience as Telemachus and Mentor between experienced and novice professionals.

A Nation at Risk

Although historically, some structures for mentoring existed within education both formally and informally, schools began to systematically implement teacher mentor programs between the 1980s-1990s in the U.S. (Zembytska, 2016). For example, *A Nation at Risk*, which called for a complete reform of public education and teacher training, was a report published by The National Commission On Excellence In Education (1983) during the Reagan Administration. Although this report did not include specific information regarding mentorship programs, it created an opportunity for schools to begin the mentorship process. This report described how the U.S. educational system was failing to educate students properly. Therefore, schools and teachers needed to start providing more rigor and standardization in both curriculum and instruction. The document further criticized teacher preparation programs and demanded that schools adopt more stringent standards and performance-based salaries for teachers (National Commission On Excellence in Education, 1983). With the publication of *A Nation at Risk,* demands for qualified teachers, especially in high needs urban schools with high student attrition rates, gained traction. *A Nation at Risk* suggested the following recommendation for teachers to become qualified to teach: "persons preparing to teach should be required to meet high educational standards, to demonstrate an aptitude for teaching, and to demonstrate competence in

an academic discipline" (National Commission On Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 38).

Consequently, schools began to look for ways to provide support to teachers beyond their initial

preparation programs. Mentor programs were used as a form of professional development for

educators to create qualified teachers or to enhance the learning of novice teachers (Hammonds,

2017).

The Improving America's School Act

Implementation and participation in mentoring programs increased from the 1980s but

only slightly between 1990 and into the early 2000s (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In October of

1994, the Clinton Administration signed into law The Improving America's School Act (IASA)

with a specific focus on Title I programs by holding Title 1 schools accountable using statewide

assessments to measure student achievement (Improving America's School Act, 1994; Le

Tendre, 1996). Under IASA, there too was a strong emphasis on high-quality teaching and

continuous professional learning (Improving America's School Act, 1994; Le Tendre, 1996). To

provide support for teachers, a handful of states began implementing mandatory induction and

mentoring programs. By 1998, 14 states had officially started providing funding for induction

programs, with 10 of those states setting money aside for mentor training (Bartlett & Johnson,

2010).

No Child Left Behind

In 2001, When No Child Left Behind (NCLB) passed at the federal level, schools were

required to staff their classrooms with "highly qualified teachers" (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Although the term "highly qualified teachers" is stated numerous times throughout the report, a

clear definition of the meaning is not provided. However, NCLB mentions several ways teachers,

administrators, and superintendents can become highly qualified using trainings, certifications,

and professional developments (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). Even more interesting is the section for local funds, which mentions developing and implementing initiatives to promote the retention of highly qualified teachers and principals, particularly within elementary schools and secondary schools with a high percentage of low-achieving students (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). The report further explains the allocation of local funding provided for the following:

(A) teacher mentoring from exemplary teachers, principals, or superintendents;

(B) induction and support for teachers and principals during their first three years of employment as teachers or principals, respectively;

(C) incentives, including financial incentives, to retain teachers who have a record of success in helping low achieving students improve their academic achievement (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001, p. 208).

In other words, under NCLB, teacher mentor programs and induction programs were to receive local funding to provide teachers with the support they needed to become highly qualified. However, NCLB also focused on closing the achievement gap and holding schools accountable based on annual standardized assessments (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). NCLB defines the achievement gap as "the academic gap between high- and low performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers" (NCLB, 2001 pg. 17). With this reform, it became apparent how significantly the profession of teaching was undervalued and not respected by those creating policies about education. For example, with no clear definition of who was considered a highly qualified teacher, student's performances on standardized assessments quickly became linked to whether a teacher was effective. The policy climate at both state and national levels began permeating a profound disrespect for teachers, especially

teachers in urban or low-income schools and for the children they taught (Nieto, 2003). Federal

education initiatives, beginning with the enactment of the NCLB, increased the interest in the

induction and mentoring to the purpose of developing "highly qualified teachers" (NCLB, 2001).

Race to the Top

Believing that competition was a key to widespread education reform, the United States

Department of Education, in 2009, next sponsored Race to the Top, which, over time, awarded

$4.35 billion to support system-wide school reform in a very few states. Forty states entered the

initial competition, which emphasized five reform areas: (a) designing and implementing

rigorous standards and high-quality assessment; **(b) attracting and keeping great teachers and**

leaders in America's classrooms; (c) using data to inform decisions and improve instruction;

(d) using innovation and effective approaches to turn-around struggling schools; and (e)

demonstrating and sustaining education reform (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Shortly

after the implementation of Race to the Top, to provide teachers support with the demands of the

new educational reform, thirty states reported offering an induction program, with twenty-eight

states specifically requiring at least one-year mentorship through a mentor program (Bartlett &

Johnson, 2010). As outlined above, one can argue that although the concept of mentoring has

been around for thousands of years, with the pressure, the implementation of mentor programs

within schools has just begun only within the past few decades.

With each new educational reform, the call for highly qualified teachers continues to

become a more important goal that schools and educators are trying to obtain. Implementing

mentor programs allows for teachers to collaborate and to feel less isolated in the

profession. Over the last few decades, due to the strong emphasis placed on testing and the

constant shift in reforms, teaching has become increasingly complex both for new and

experienced teachers. For example, the requirements set upon teachers are continuously growing and changing due to a broadening of curricular demands (Livingston, 2014). Livingston (2014) attests that "increased attention needs to be given to providing systematic training and ongoing professional learning for in-school mentors to enable them to gain a deeper understanding of their role and be recognized and valued as teacher educators" (p. 229).

(In)Equitable Mentoring

To further demonstrate the need for more current professional development, (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017) refer to a *demographic divide* that describes current teacher demographics coinciding with today's student's makeup, creating the possibility of a significant cultural-knowledge gap between teachers and students. Hence, any attempt to see culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) enacted on a larger scale in U.S. schools is contingent on helping teachers bridge the widespread cultural-knowledge gap in their classrooms (Gay, 2002). Implementing culturally relevant practices can be difficult without professional development because teachers do not leave their values at the door when they enter their classroom. As much as teachers might want to hide or avoid their values and beliefs, they slip in the door with them (Nieto, 2003). Nieto (2003) further explains that students benefit from being taught by a diverse group of teachers. Students should be exposed to teachers of other cultures; therefore, schools should seek to hire teachers with a variety of backgrounds. Thus, what is needed is a way not only to translate theory to practice for inservice and preservice teachers but also teachers must think about their pedagogical decisions and practices through a cultural lens (Gay, 2002; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017). As education continues to change, Hobbs and Stovall (2015) argue that well-developed mentoring programs and mentor training can increase mentor effectiveness to ensure the development in the knowledge and practices needed to assist others in culturally appropriate ways.

Despite the research evidence in support of mentoring, there are many flaws within these programs. For example, teacher mentor programs vary not only between states, but these programs also fluctuate considerably between schools within the same districts. Mentor programs in schools need to determine if they have guidelines that mentors can follow when working with their mentees. For example, in many cases, there are no set criteria for the implementation of mentor programs within schools. Although many states have mandated that schools provide a mentor program for beginning teachers, how these programs are structured is often a local school decision. As a result, when schools implement mentor programs, they are subject to individual interpretation and availability of resources.

Many studies have shown that mentoring and induction programs play an integral part in education reform not only in the United States but also in many countries worldwide, particularly since the 1980s (Hobson et al., 2009). Although many states have mandatory mentor or induction programs, access to the support in which these programs provide remains inequitable. Teachers in high-poverty or urban schools with a high number of poor and minority students tend to have lower participation rates in the induction and mentoring programs (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). For schools with high attrition rates, the instability can be problematic when a school is trying to implement a mentor program that promotes professional growth rather than teaching mentees with the mentality to merely survive.

In some states, there are more structured programs. For example, in Texas, teachers can become mentor teachers once they meet the requirements published by the Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program (BTIM). Within this program supported by a federal grant, teachers are chosen to become mentors if they have been teaching for at least three or more years, are working in the same school and content area as their mentee, pass a mentoring training

program and have a reputation for obtaining high student-level achievement (Bullough, 2012). In other states like Utah, the law provides beginning teachers with a mentor; however, mentoring is inconsistent among school districts (Bullough, 2012). Depending on the school, the district and the state, mentoring programs vary in the support both the mentor and mentee receive. With mentor programs differing in the support provided to both mentors and mentees, it is difficult to determine how to make improvements to these programs. Depending on the mentor program in place at a school, mentors and mentees may meet with one another weekly, monthly, or sometimes only a single meeting at the beginning of the year (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Despite the progress states have made in offering induction and mentor opportunities, access to induction and mentor support remains inequitable. Reports have shown that teachers working in high-needs schools have significantly lower participation rates in mentoring programs due to the lack of mentors compared to those teachers working at an affluent school (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). Furthermore, when teachers from high-needs schools are paired with a mentor, research shows they are more likely to be paired with a mentor teacher from another subject area or grade level (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). Unfortunately, when teachers are paired with a mentor from another grade level or subject area, it can become challenging to provide the support needed for the beginning teacher and mentor relationship to succeed. With different schedules and standards at a minimum, it can become difficult for the pair to find time to meet and discuss lesson ideas or teaching strategies for the classroom. Even more problematic may be the mentor's ability to support the mentee given their different knowledge base and experience.

Furthermore, for collaboration to effectively occur, mentor teachers need to be willing and able to provide their mentees with the information required to be successful. Sometimes

mentors unknowingly withhold information from their mentees because of the often-unclear responsibilities of a mentor. In school environments that do not provide a strong mentor program in place or a mentor pairing that lacks active collaboration, potentially turn into *judgmentoring* (Hobson & Malderez, 2013) or even informal hazing (Catapano & Huisman, 2013). Judgmentoring is further described by Hobson and Malderez (2013) as confusing evaluating with mentoring and judging new teachers instead of providing support in the form of helping new teachers grow professionally. Rather than providing new teachers with the guidance needed to show growth, some mentor teachers have the responsibility of assessing their mentees' performance, which can lead to passing judgement (Hobson and Malderez, 2013). It is also clear that for some beginner teachers, "the experience of judgementoring has a negative impact on their well-being, with some describing themselves after encounters with judgementors as 'disheartened, demoralized, isolated, or lonely' (p.96). For teachers seeking a collaborative and supportive environment, working with a mentor who is negative and judgmental is a quick way to create an atmosphere where new teachers feel unsupported and not valued. For example, a mentor may think that their approach to teaching is the only right approach, leaving the mentee to feel as though they need to adopt the mentor's techniques rather than speak up and present their own ideas. This power differential can undermine the entire mentorship experience.

Another unexpected mentoring issue that new teachers may experience can be informal hazing. New teachers can experience informal hazing in a variety of forms, such as, their opinions may be not valued and instead are told by their mentors to conform to only their advice or what the school and district devalues. (Catapano and Huisman, 2013) Veteran teachers can also inadvertently or unintentionally withhold information from their mentees. Beginning of the year procedures like sign-ups for library times or where to get supplies for their classroom are

sometimes told to the mentee only after the mentor has gotten the supplies or time slots they need to preserve their standing at the school (Catapano & Huisman, 2013). One can argue that mentors need to have a clear understanding and agreement as to what the expectations and roles are of a mentor for that school and are not just given the title and assigned a mentee.

Mentor Selection

Teachers that are selected to mentor others most often are chosen by the administration because of their years of experience or academic success (Hobbs & Stovall, 2015). Mentors tend to be experienced teachers, though it is not immediately apparent that a good teacher will automatically become a good mentor (Bullough, 2012; Catapano & Huisman, 2013; Russell & Russell, 2011), or whether experience is enough to adequately support new teachers during the first year of teaching (Catapano & Huisman, 2013). Years of experience is no longer enough to determine whether a teacher is qualified to be a mentor. Teachers should not be considered for the role of a mentor based on their years of experience alone, but also, whether they possess the leadership skills needed to effectively mentor another person (Catapano & Huisman, 2013). Just because a teacher is successful at teaching does not mean that they will be successful at mentoring another teacher:

> As mentoring programs have matured, it has become apparent that caring and insightful classroom teachers do not necessarily know how to mentor new teachers. Training people for the role of mentors serving teachers is a critical aspect of any effective program. It is simply not sufficient to identify people as mentors and then throw them into service in that capacity. (Daresh, 2003, p. 28)

In other words, the process of mentor selection is just as crucial as those ultimately chosen to serve as a mentor.

Research has shown that being an effective teacher is not enough to make an effective mentor, and many teachers that are selected to be mentors often feel unprepared or unsupported when taking on the role of mentoring another teacher (Ambrosetti, 2014; Russell & Russell, 2011). While many teacher mentors, when working with a mentee, express a feeling of excitement and motivation because the opportunity provides the mentor to share their ideas and gain new insights, many mentors express a sense of being unprepared and needing more training (Russell & Russell, 2011). Catapano and Huisman (2013) also found that by mentoring, the teacher mentors gained the ability to reflect on their practice and shared their reasons for mentoring, but also discussed the challenge of facing time constraints when trying to meet with their mentee or provide other support. Many mentor teachers do not receive professional learning before becoming a mentor for a new teacher, which in turn only further perpetuates the idea of learning to sink or swim. Without a clear understanding of their responsibility as a mentor, many teachers selected for this role rely on their own past experiences of mentoring to guide them through the process (Lortie, 1975). Thomas-Alexander and Harper (2017) state, "it is particularly crucial that mentors be chosen carefully based upon both their pedagogical strengths and belief system" (p. 50). Many teacher mentor programs need revamping (Ambrosetti, 2014) with a focus on providing support and resources for the teachers selected as mentors.

Reciprocal Learning

Once selected, designated, or volunteered, there are various ways that teachers can learn to become mentors; experience or self-reflection are conventional methods. Well done mentoring allows for educators to learn collaboratively among other teachers and engage in meaningful dialogue, which can provide both the mentees and mentors with an opportunity to reflect on their practices (Catapano & Huisman, 2013). Mentors can use the interactions made with their mentees to positively influence their teaching practices (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Both mentors

and mentees have found mentor programs to be beneficial to their teaching practices. Mentors found that participating as a mentor allowed them to reflect on their teaching practices, whereas the mentees found the mentor program to help increase their knowledge of classroom/district/state assessments (Mathur et al., 2013). Although working with a mentor can provide an opportunity to collaborate and reflect on procedural tasks, often culturally relevant practices are left out (Pinto et al., 2012a).

It is sometimes assumed only the mentee is learning in a mentoring relationship when instead, both participants can learn from one another through social interaction. To create a positive mentoring environment, both *inside* and *outside* mentoring practices take place between both the mentor and mentee (Gardiner, 2017). *Inside* mentoring occurs when mentor teachers work with their mentees directly and refer to collaborative teaching, demonstrating teaching, and lesson modeling (Gardiner, 2017). Working closely together allows for both the mentor and mentee to share ideas about lessons and collaborate. *Outside* mentoring occurs when the action of mentoring takes place before or after instruction and refers to brief interactions, co-planning lessons together, and videotaping lessons later for reflection (Gardiner, 2017). It is essential that both the mentor and mentee experience a variety of inside and outside mentoring teaching practices to provide teachers with the opportunities to attain their instructional goals. By establishing expectations of the mentors, a partner mentorship is created, which allows both the mentor and mentee to share and obtain new ideas.

Mentoring Beginning Teacher

In a study of the implementation of the Mentoring Beginning Teacher (MBT) program in an Australian state, Hudson and Hudson (2016), investigated the mentor teachers' perceptions of mentoring novice teachers in their schools with a specific focus on goal setting. The results of

this study found that the use of goal setting helped the mentors have a clear focus and vision when working with their mentees rather than trying to guess the needs of their mentees. The mentors within this study used the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) as a guideline to aid in their goal setting. The study further showed how goal setting contributed to the professional growth for both the mentors and mentees. By providing the standards as a guideline to work toward goals, it gave both the mentor and mentee a feeling of accomplishment when working together.

Mentors, Meanings, and Possibilities

Furthermore, in a study by Kupila, Ukkonen-Mikkola, and Rantala (2017), a mentor training program in Finland was studied at a school for preschool teachers. Implementation of the program called "Mentors, Meanings, and Possibilities" described the mentor teachers' perceptions before, during, and after the training program. Findings before the implementation of the program found that the teacher mentors expressed a feeling of uncertainty when it came to their role as a mentor. During the training program, the mentor teachers were self-reflective, and after the implementation of the training program, the roles and responsibilities of the mentor became clearer. For example, after the training, the mentors further understood the complexity of the mentoring role, which led them also to understand the level of professionalism they needed to have as a mentor.

Mentor Match

Also, in three states across the United States, Florida, Massachusetts, and Michigan, Kardos and Johnson (2010) studied the experiences of new teachers with their official mentors. Although the study found a large proportion of the new teachers had formal, experienced mentors, unfortunately, when examining the details of the mentor match—whether the mentor

was in the same school, same grade level, and same subject area—large proportions of the new teachers were in what seemed to be less than ideal pairings. For example, many findings supported that the new teachers had never been observed by their mentors or had less than three conversations with their mentors about classroom management, lesson planning, and classroom instruction, especially in schools in low-income areas with high attrition rates (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). Not only had the new teachers lacked receiving guidance and support on procedural tasks like lesson planning, but also with understanding the diverse cultural, academic, and social needs of their students. Even more unsettling are the inequities that surround the access to mentor programs among schools. In the states of Florida, Massachusetts, and Michigan, 78% of all new teachers in were assigned official mentors by their school or district during their first year; however, 91% of new teachers in high-income schools were provided formal mentors, while only 65% percent of new teachers in low-income schools had official mentors (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). The findings in this article further support the importance of providing equitable mentoring programs to ensure the development and growth of teachers across all learners.

In a study that focused on how mentors were assigned, Andrews and Quinn (2005) researched differences in the perception of the amount of support received among first-year teachers with (a) a mentor assigned through the school district's mentor teacher program, (b) a mentor assigned by their principals, and (c) no assigned mentor. The findings with this study showed that there was a significant difference between the amount of support received when assigning a mentor by the school district or principal versus those without an assigned mentor at all. Furthermore, this supports how vital a mentor teacher's role is to a new teacher. Without being assigned a mentor, many teachers reported a feeling of *not-knowing* (Andrews & Quinn, 2005). The term not-knowing describes anything unclear, which in turn can make the job at hand

difficult (Andrews & Quinn, 2005). The idea of not-knowing can range from classroom tasks, procedural tasks, or even student behavior expectations. For example, understanding how to call in sick, the grading policy, or behavior management systems can all fall under the category of not-knowing if a new teacher is not aware of that school's procedures. However, when a mentor is paired with a new teacher, whether from the school or the district, the opportunity for collaboration and professional growth are much more significant.

Opportunities for Program Improvement

Although the implementation of mentor programs in schools has begun to increase over the past few decades, there is very little research supporting how to improve mentor programs. With many districts taking notice of how crucial effective mentoring is for the longevity of the success of both the mentor and mentee, induction and mentor programs are beginning to gain more attention. Many districts now acknowledge teachers new to a school need help and have provided these teachers with mentor and induction programs, albeit unevenly (Patrick, 2013). With the topic of mentor programs developing, much of the research shows that the need is there for these programs to retain teachers. There are plenty of mentor programs in place; however, little research has determined their effectiveness and how to make improvements (Hudson & Hudson, 2016). One suggestion for improving these programs is that schools need to engage in continuous evaluation of their mentoring processes and mentor-mentee relationships to determine if they are providing the most effective support for all their teachers (Mathur, Gehrke, & Kim, 2013). However, improvements for a clearer understanding of the professional development required to better prepare teachers for a mentoring role because of the various teacher mentor programs offered (Hudson & Hudson, 2016). Before deciding what type of professional development teachers in a mentor program need, it is essential to determine what the needs of new teachers are. For example, the mentor program may be different than that of a

school with a high attrition rate versus a school that experiences a lower rate of teacher turnover. To better prepare mentors, Gjedia and Gardinier (2018) suggest, prospective mentors should obtain professional learning and qualification to ensure that they are performing according to the professional standards, particularly in the areas of communication, counseling, design of objectives, and evaluation and assessment methods. However, further research is required in the understanding of the professional development methods used by the various teacher mentor program models offered and how to determine if those professional development methods are effective (Hudson & Hudson, 2016). This research further supports the assertion that mentor programs can be effective, however schools need to examine the implementation of their existing programs. Given the research surrounding mentor programs, this study attempts to identify the procedural and growth needs of those teachers in a mentor program in hopes of understanding how to provide the support they need to be successful in this profession.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Research is a process in which we learn more about something than we did before

engaging in the process, and although there are numerous types of research, applied research

aims to improve the practice and solve practical problems (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton,

1990). The purpose of applied research is to "illuminate a societal concern of problem in the

search for solutions" (Patton,1990, p.248). Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding

how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and the meaning that

attributes to their experiences (Hays, 2004; Yin, 2014). Qualitative research can lead to data that

allows individuals to learn about an experience or to provide a voice to individuals who may not

be heard otherwise (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The purpose of this study engaged in the

experiences of mentees in a co-constructed mentorship program in a high-needs elementary

school. This study aimed to understand the procedural and growth needs in a co-constructed

mentorship program. Thus, a qualitative approach is appropriate to fully explain the experiences

of the participants and allow the researcher to gather the data necessary to answer the research

questions. This chapter is organized into a description of the research design, participant

selection, ethical concerns, description, and justification of the sample and setting, data

collection methods, data analysis methods, the role of the researcher, and trustworthiness.

Research Design

Qualitative researchers construct reality and make sense of the world through their

experience (Merriam, 1998). Within a constructivist approach, the belief is "all knowledge, and

therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practice, being constructed in

and out of an interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted

within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 2003, p. 4). The learner is actively involved in their

learning and personal experiences (Egbert & Sanders, 2014). Although there are various

approaches to qualitative research to explore the human experience, case study, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry all seek to understand the experiences and stories that makeup who people are (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, narrative inquiry, in particular, is a way of understanding and inquiring into an experience through "a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). The lives of people are shaped by the stories of who they are and how they interpret their past. A story is a portal in which a person enters the world by which their experience is made meaningful (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

Narrative Inquiry

Engaging in narrative inquiry entails thinking within the three commonplaces: temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, 2013). Commonplaces are dimensions to be simultaneously explored when undertaking a narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Attending to experience through inquiry into all three commonplaces is, in part, what distinguishes narrative inquiry from other methodologies (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through attending to the commonplaces, narrative inquirers can study the complexity of the relational composition of people's lived experiences both inside and outside of an inquiry as well as to imagine the future possibilities of these lives (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Temporality. "Events under study are in temporal transition" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479). Rather than describing an event, a person, or an object, a narrative inquirer describes them with a past, a present, and a future (Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). A narrative inquirer may say a person with a particular history is associated with present behaviors or actions, which can then connect to future practices (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

For example, this provides the researcher with an opportunity to make connections between a person's stories of the past and present to their future behaviors.

Sociality. Narrative inquirers attend to both personal conditions and, simultaneously to social conditions. By personal conditions, "we mean the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480) of the inquirer and participants. Social conditions refer to a person's environment under which people's experiences and events unfold. These social conditions are understood, in part, in terms of cultural, social, institutional, and linguistic narratives (Clandinin, 2013). A second dimension of the sociality commonplace directs attention to the inquiry relationship between researchers' and participants' lives. Narrative inquirers cannot remove themselves from the inquiry relationship. For example, through narrative inquiry, the researcher and participants can co-construct knowledge through the use of their individual experiences.

Place. "The specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). The key to this commonplace is recognizing that "all events take place someplace" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 481). For narrative inquirers, our identities link our experiences in a place or places, and with the stories, we tell of these experiences (Clandinin, 2013). For example, it is important to understand that stories and events situate themselves in place or places.

As both the researcher and director of the mentor program, the place in which my experience happens are just as important as the story itself. I selected narrative inquiry for my study because I am concerned with the perspectives and experiences of the teachers currently in a mentoring program at a high-needs elementary school. As stated in chapter 2, there are many inequalities within mentor programs, particularly programs in high-needs schools. Not only do

the experiences of these teachers in mentor programs need to be examined, but also analyzing where their experiences took place.

Narrative Inquiries Beginnings

The kinds of narrative inquiry capture differences between the living and the telling. While most narrative inquiries begin with telling stories, that is, with a researcher interviewing or having conversations with participants who tell stories of their experiences, "a more difficult, time-consuming, intensive, and yet, more profound method is, to begin with, participants' living because, in the end, narrative inquiry is about life and living" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 478). Furthermore, from either starting point, narrative inquirers position themselves in relational ways with their participants. Some narrative inquirers see themselves and their participants as co-composing each aspect of the inquiry as well as their lives as they live out the inquiry. This type of living inquiry lends itself to a participatory study in which the narrative inquirer, as researcher, is participating, along with the participants. Other narrative inquirers see themselves and their participants at more of a distance. Telling inquiry lends itself to an interview study in which the narrative inquirer uses a series of interviews to gather information from the participants. With the purpose of this study to examine the experiences of mentees in a co-constructed mentorship program in a high-needs elementary school of which I am director, I took a participatory approach by creating a living inquiry.

School Demographics

The site I where conducted the research is an elementary school located in a large metropolitan city in the southeastern U.S. Although this school is classified as a Title 1 school, it is also considered a "Beating the Odds" school. State Department of Education (2017) defines a Title 1 school as a school that receives financial assistance to support the high percentages of children from low-income families enrolled in the school to ensure that all children meet

challenging academic standards. A school that has 'Beaten the Odds' is a school that is performing higher than other similar schools based using the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2018). Although teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate everywhere (Bressman, Winter, & Efron, 2018; R. M. Ingersoll, 2002) schools that are serving underprivileged students are at higher risk of having a revolving door of teachers in the school (Dunn, Deroo, & VanDerHeide, 2017; Hammonds, 2017; R. Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). This school was chosen as a convenience sample, because I have access to the school daily as a teacher at Bramble Elementary. More importantly, with over 150 staff members, there are typically more than 25 teachers new to the school at the beginning of the year. Each mentee is assigned a mentor from their grade level to help with their transition to the school. However, depending on the grade level, some mentees must share mentors due to the lack of returning teachers. The study took place over six weeks.

Approximately 90% of the school's student body population is free or reduced lunch. For the 2017 school year, the student population was made up of over 60% Latinx students, close to 20% of Black students, over 10% Asian students, and a combined 5% of White and Multiracial students. Of the students that attend the school, close to 60% of the students participate in English as a Second Language (ESOL) services. This school also has a Dual Language Immersion (DLI) Spanish program K-5 school-wide. The staff population is very diverse, with the most common ethnicities representing Hispanic/Latinx, Black, and White throughout the school.

Mentorship Program

Although the school in this study has a teacher mentoring program in place, there is no formal professional learning required or provided for the mentors. The mentees are assigned a teacher mentor at the beginning of the year by the administrators or lead teacher mentors. The

mentees are enrolled in both an induction program through the county as well as with their school. The induction program through the county meets two days during the summer as part of the mentoring program; the mentees additionally attend a once a month 60-minute meeting. Despite the research differentiating induction and mentor programs, through this district, they are used synonymously. The mentors do not attend the monthly mentor meetings as they have other committees they are serving on during that time. Each monthly session focuses on a topic to better help the mentee adjust to teaching and are designed locally, in this case, by myself as the director and researcher. Some of the items discussed range in providing information about grading, how to do lesson planning, and parent conferences. With the mentors unable to attend the meetings, the mentors are provided talking points of topics to further discuss with their mentee by the lead mentors during individual support time. Any other meetings between the teacher mentors and mentees are scheduled individually.

Due to the pandemic, I sent an interest email to all mentors and mentees in the mentor program (see Appendix B) rather than meeting in person. I chose to interview three mentors and three mentees based on those participants that fit my criteria and emailed the participants a consent form (see Appendix C) for participating in the study. I used a criterion-based selection strategy to choose my participants for this research. This approach is frequently used by researchers to construct an understanding of all cases that meet specific pre-determined criteria (Patton, 1990). Three mentors and three mentees volunteered to participate based on the study criteria. With the mentors ranging from teaching at the Kindergarten to fifth (K-5) grade and the level of expertise of the mentors fluctuating between three to twenty years, I thought it was important to get a variety of perspectives thus participants were selected based on years of

teaching experience and their teaching position. I did not select mentor pairings because my focus for this study is on the needs of the individuals rather than the mentor relationship.

From the teachers that volunteered, my participants for the mentees were from each of the following levels of experience: a novice teacher (0-3 years teaching), an intermediate teacher (4-8 years of teaching), and a veteran teacher (9+ years of teaching). With the mentors and mentees K-5 and the level of expertise of both fluctuating between three to twenty years, obtaining multiple perspectives was crucial.

Figure 2: Participant chart

Name	Role	Ethnicity	Teaching Experience	Grade	Gender
Lidia Lawrence	Mentor 1	white	5 and ½ years teaching	3rd grade	Female
Naomi Stewart	Mentor 2	Black	11 years teaching	IRR teacher	Female
Ramon Fletcher	Mentor 3	white	8 years teaching	2nd grade	Male
Breanna Murphy	Mentee 1	Black/Hispanic	7 years teaching intermediate	5th grade	Female
Lane Anderson	Mentee 2	white	1st year teacher novice	4th grade	Female
Rakel Smith	Mentee 3	African American	15 years teaching veteran	1st grade	Female

Methods of Data Collection

The criteria for purposeful narrative inquiry vary among each inquirer because each inquirer can develop a set of standards that are appropriate for their work (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). A narrative inquirer can collect data by examining documents, observing behaviors, or even interviewing participants. Narrative inquiry is described by (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as a relational process in which the researcher and the participant co-construct data, which they term as *field text*. *Field texts* represent the experiences of the participants and the researcher (Clandinin, 2013). To answer the research question, I collected qualitative data to understand the

participants' experiences. Although various types of data can be obtained in narrative inquiry, I focused on semi-structured individual interviews with the mentees and mentors, and my narrative beginnings, researcher's journal.

Narrative Beginning and Researcher's Journal

Narrative inquirers write their autobiographical narrative before beginning a study as a way of exploring their memories, experiences, and rationale for becoming involved in the study (Clandinin, 2013). When a researcher frames their reflection as a narrative, they can begin to understand the importance and power of narratives represented in the data. I maintained a researcher journal that begins with my narrative beginning throughout the data collection process to reflect on not only my experience but the experiences of my participants (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). As a researcher, it is crucial to have a place to process my thoughts and feelings throughout the study so that I do not unknowingly project any feelings that may surface during the study. Since I am both the researcher and director of the mentor program, I must acknowledge my part in this study using my narrative beginning and a researcher's journal.

It is particularly important to understand "composing *field texts* means being alert to what one's participants do and say as part of their ongoing experiences, and it means keeping a record on how they are experiencing the experience of being in the inquiry"(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 88). The difference between journal writing and field notes is that journals "are a powerful way for individuals to give accounts of their experience" (p. 102). Journals are a method for creating *field texts* and allow me as the researcher to reflect on my own experiences in the field and explore threads within the inquiry. It also provides an additional text by which I can con-construct the mentorship story with my participants.

Initial Conversation

Another way of composing a *field text* is by using conversations. Conversations can either be face-to-face encounters individually or in groups. The importance of having an initial conversation with participants aside from just official interviews creates a space for "equality among participants" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 109). Initial conversations allow the participants to establish topics of discussion rather than the interviewer deciding the direction the interview will go in. Having prior relationships with my participants provided me with some trust and rapport with my participants at the beginning of our shared inquiry process. I combined the initial conversation with the first interview because of the level of rapport that was already establishing. After my participants confirmed their commitment to the study, I scheduled a time to meet with them through Webex based on the availability in their schedule to review the informed consent form and begin our first interview. I did not format the initial conversation like an interview, but rather I began by asking the participants to tell me about themselves and why they became a teacher. The purpose of the initial conversation questions was for me to get to know my participants on a more personal level by allowing the participants to direct the flow and topics discussed. It is crucial for me as the researcher to actively listen to the participant rather than focus on writing field notes while the conversation is taking place. Therefore Clandinin (2013) encourages audio-recording the conversation for later transcription so that the researcher can focus on the conversation. As the participants spoke, I jotted down quotes or phrases that resonated with me but focused heavily on the stories my participants told. Right after the conversation, I used my researcher journal to reflect on the experience and begin to transcribe the audio recording.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Researchers utilize different types of interview structures, including structured, semi-structured, and unstructured, based on the purpose of the interview (Roulston, 2009). I used semi-structured interviews, which are considered less rigid than structured interviews, but unlike unstructured interviews, they follow a general interview protocol. By using a semi-structured interview with my participants, the interview lends itself to be less formal and more conversation-like which allowed me to ask the participants follow-up or clarifying questions based on their responses.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allowed me to pursue related threads of a story that came up when interviewing my participants. Due to the pandemic, I conducted my interviews with my mentees (see Appendix D) and (see Appendix E) as well as my mentees (see Appendix F) and (see Appendix G) virtually using Webex as we could not meet face to face. Conducting interviews through Webex allowed me to audio-record the conversation. I did not use video during my interviews because my participants were in their homes and many of my participants have young children which I did not have approval through IRB to record them. I held two rounds of semi-structured interviews which both ranged from about 45 minutes to one-hour. I limited the conversations to no longer than one-hour to avoid participant exhaustion (Roulston, 2009). I wanted to be mindful of the fact the participants are educators, and their time is precious. I set up times to meet with each mentor based on his/her schedule by sending out a google form that asked my participants availability. Conducting interviews during the pandemic allowed my participants more flexibility with their work schedules because they were working from home.

As I interviewed each participant, I actively listened to ask any clarifying questions based on the responses I received. This allowed me to concentrate on the conversation rather than focusing on writing notes during the interview. Right after the conversation, I used my researcher journal to reflect on the experience and begin to transcribe the audio-recording (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

As I began my field text from the first interview, I started to compose an interim text for each of my participants to review. Interim texts are defined as "texts situated in the spaces between field texts and final published research texts" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 133). During the second interview, I followed up with the participants about the interim text, and then I asked the participants to reflect on their experiences as a mentee in their current mentor program and how this program has influenced their growth as an educator. Participants had the opportunity to provide feedback on the interim text after the first interview and the second interim text while at the second interview. After analyzing and developing an interim text based on both interviews, I scheduled times with each of the participants to review and provide feedback regarding the interim text.

Artifacts

Another type of data collection technique used in conjunction with interviews is collecting documents. As a researcher, it is essential to decide which documents are relevant to the narrative inquiry in which we are investigating. Sometimes relationships become the focus in narrative inquiry, and it can be easy to forget about the relevance of documents as data sources. "The researcher who establishes intimate participant relations can become so focused on the relationship that the flow of documents that help contextualize the work goes unnoticed" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 114). These responses contextualize the participant's experience

in the program by providing another frame of reference for analysis. Unfortunately, I was unable to collect artifacts for this study due to the pandemic. At the time I interviewed the participants, schools were closed, and teachers were working from home with whatever supplies they had at their homes. Many participants referenced items like lesson plans, anchor charts, or classroom management strategies they incorporated in their classrooms because of their mentor or mentee. However, when schools abruptly closed due to COVID-19, much of the materials teachers used to teach were left in the school buildings forcing me to rely heavily on the participants' interviews rather than incorporating artifacts.

Data Analysis

I began the data analysis after conducting the first interview. With each narrative different, there is no one way of analyzing the data. The analysis of data was a continual process as I worked to collect data. Analyzing the field texts in narrative inquiry is complicated because they can become rich with data. Narrative inquirers tend to begin with narratively coding their field texts. "For example, names of the characters that appear in field texts, places where actions and events occurred, storylines, tensions that emerge, and continuities and discontinuities that appear are all possible codes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The term 'codes' are labels that researchers apply to sections of data, whether interview transcripts, documents, or field notes that represent some aspect of the data (Roulston, 2009).

My data analysis process began as I collected my interviews from my participants. Immediately after I collected the first interviews, I transcribed the interviews using Otter (https://otter.ai/login). I uploaded my audio recordings into Otter and went through each line to ensure my transcriptions were accurate. After my first round of transcriptions were complete, I sent them to my participants as one form of member checking. Once my participants reviewed and verified their transcription from their first interview, I set up a second interview date

completed this process again with the second interview. Once my participants checked over both transcriptions from their interviews, I began coding my data.

To code my data, I used the data analysis resources on Quirkos (www.quirkos.com). I uploaded one participant's transcript at a time and established the data base. From there, I started with In Vivo coding as a "splitter" where every line of the data was assigned its own code (Saldaña, 2016). However, with six participants I quickly realized coding as a "splitter" was not the most time effective and switched to coding as a "lumper" where I could apply one word or phrase for every three to five sentences (Saldaña, 2016). I again used Quirkos to help me color code and visually keep track of manage my coding. As I coded my data through Quirkos, the website allowed me to manipulate my data by moving codes into the Quirkos bubbles. As I moved more codes into the Quirkos bubbles my bubbles became larger showing me which themes arose in importance from the larger database.

After my first initial coding, I went back through my data and coded it again using descriptive coding which allowed me to summarize in a word or short phrase the topic of the data's contents (Saldaña, 2016). Once I coded my data, I began to co-construct my participants' narratives incorporating my experiences where our stories overlapped. This part of the data analysis process was especially powerful because I began to see the commonalities not only between myself and my participants but also the threads woven between my participants. After I co-constructed the narratives of each participant, I sent the stories back to my participants as a final form of member checking. This gave my participants the opportunities to verify that their experiences were accurately represented in the writing.

Although each narrative is unique and different all participants had commonalities among their stories that lead me to create narrative threads while analyzing the data. Lastly, I used the

narrative threads that emerged from the data analysis to present my findings and suggestions for

further research. Furthermore, throughout the data analysis process, I maintained a journal to

help me reflect upon my findings in my data and sift through any wonderings. Each piece of a

field text in the inquiry reflected part of the experience and event that took place in the field.

Therefore, as a narrative inquirer I spent many hours reading and reading the field texts to

construct a summarized account (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Once the interim text was

constructed from the field text, and the participants provide feedback with approval, I created a

research text. The research text is the final representation of the field text (Clandinin & Connelly,
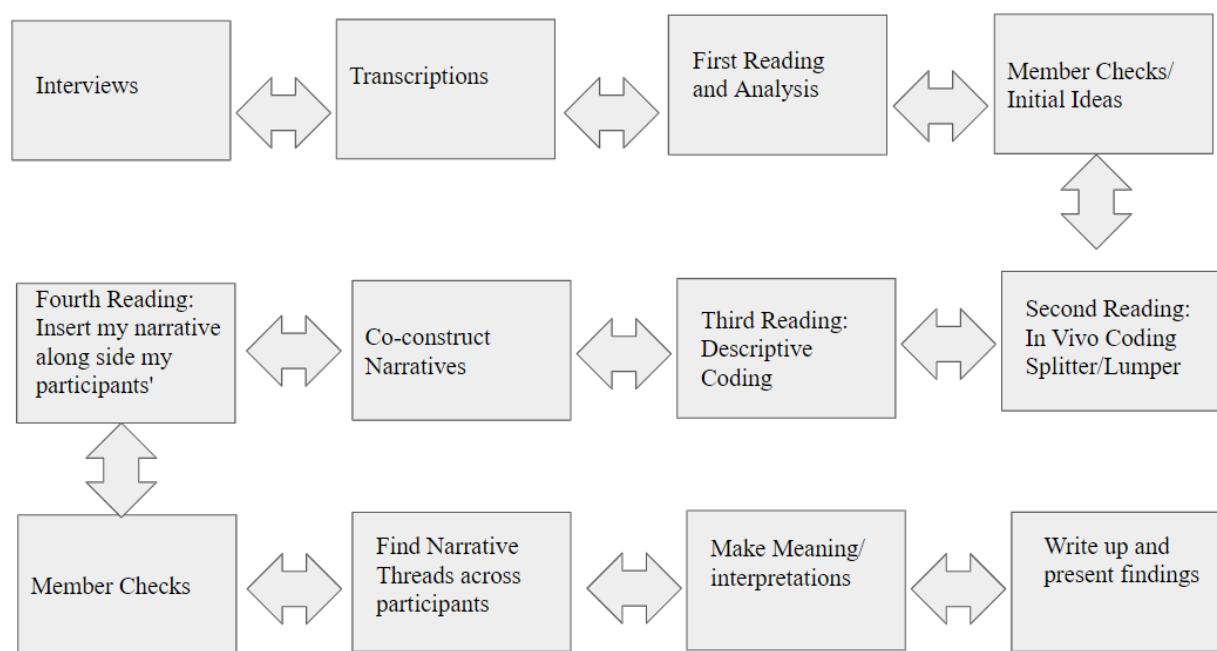
2000).

Figure 3: This data analysis flow chart shows arrows representing the iterative and simultaneous

nature of the data collection and data analysis.

Trustworthiness

With qualitative research seeking to explore and understand issues in a real-world setting, providing qualitative scholars with criteria to follow can be useful when understanding the structure of a study and determining if it is trustworthy. Just like when a chef is learning how to cook, or a musician is learning to play a new song, both follow criteria that are put into place to assist those novice learners in becoming more advanced when understanding the content (Tracy, 2010). Lincoln and Guba (1985) pose the question, "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audience that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?" (p. 290). To establish a level of high-quality qualitative research, (Tracy, 2010) discusses eight criteria which can help achieve a well-developed qualitative study: (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence (pg. 839). Demonstrating trustworthiness is important in qualitative research to provide the readers with an opportunity to understand what makes a study trustworthy. Each of these strategies reflects a level of rigor in qualitative research.

Worthy Topic

When a topic is relevant and significantly interesting, it creates an opportunity for those reading to become surprised or shaken based on the research. When a study is worthy, it may provide educational authenticity - a raised awareness or understanding and appreciation of others (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). It is no secret the education field experiences a high attrition rate, especially with teachers working in low-income schools. However, what makes my study significantly interesting is the specific focus on ways mentor programs can foster professional capital, procedural knowledge, and develop cultural proficiency. Schools and districts provide teachers with countless opportunities for professional growth, utilizing mentor programs as one.

However, very rarely are teachers going through these programs or professional growth opportunities asked about their specific needs to grow further in the educational field.

Rich Rigor

The second criteria for creating trustworthiness for the study to demonstrate rich rigor. I will also use a thick, rich description (Geertz, 1973) to tell the experiences of those teachers in a mentorship program. Thick descriptions require the researcher to provide a complex depiction so that the readers can draw their conclusions regarding the research. Through using narrative inquiry, the readers received detailed descriptions of the experiences and perceptions of both the mentee and mentors in a mentor program working in a diverse elementary school. These detailed descriptions led the reader to understand the stories of the participants. Things to be mindful of when trying to ensure the rigor of a study are the amount of data that supports the claims and the length of time spent collecting the data (Tracy, 2010). I spent six weeks collecting multiple data sources ranging from semi-structured interviews from both mentors and mentees, notes from my researcher's journal and my narrative beginnings.

Sincerity

The third criteria for creating trustworthiness is to provide sincerity. When the research is sincere, the researcher is transparent about their role and any biases they may bring. For example,

> Subjectivity is not a badge of honor, something earned like a merit badge and
> paraded around on special occasions for all to see. Whatever the substance of
> one's persuasions at a given point, one's subjectivity is like a garment that cannot
> be removed. It is insistent present in both the research and nonresearched aspects
> of our life (Peskin, p. 17).

In other words, as the researcher, I must be aware of my own experiences that I may bring to the study. As an educator who has experienced both sides of a mentoring program, it is crucial to have an effective mentor program in place in schools for teachers to build their professional capital and become culturally proficient. I also acknowledge my own white privilege and position of power with the role as the lead mentor. I am interested in this topic of study because while working in a high-needs elementary school, I see a high turn-over rate of teachers both leaving the profession and transferring among schools each year. Teaching is a demanding profession but establishing a successful mentor program in a school that continuously sees teachers leaving can help alleviate can potentially be a solution to the problem.

Credibility

For a study to demonstrate credibility, it should have thick description, triangulation, and member checking (Tracy, 2010). To ensure the accuracy of the findings, I triangulated the data by using various data sources. Triangulation of data is when the researcher uses multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or various methods to confirm the study's findings (Hays, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Tracy, 2010). One of the major strengths of using narrative inquiry is the ability to have multiple data sources. Rather than only interviewing one mentor and mentee, I interviewed three mentees and three mentors to provide me with multiple data sources. The mentors and mentees were not matched in order to protect participant privacy and promote accurate data collection. Triangulation provides the ability to incorporate the perspectives of numerous mentee and mentor teachers. Through the triangulation process, I compared data, themes, and commonalities.

Resonance

For a study to demonstrate resonance, it creates transferability. Transferability allows the readers to feel as though the research overlaps their situation in which they can transfer into their own life (Tracy, 2010). For a study to show resonance, it also needs to provide a significant contribution. There are different ways research can be significant, with one being *practically significant research* (Tracy, 2010). When a study is practically significant, it stands to ask the reader if the research in this study will shed light on a current problem or issue. For this study, I believe that the mentor programs within our schools, especially the mentor programs within high-needs schools, are desperately overlooked in research. As previously stated in Chapter 2, only within the past few decades has it become mandatory for schools and districts to provide teachers new to a school with a mentor. However, the implementation of mentor programs is a local school decision leading to an inequality of services and support teachers receive among schools. Not all teachers receive the support they need to grow professionally once entering the field of education, only further feeding into the teacher attrition instead. Even if a teacher is provided with a mentor, many of those teachers selected in as a mentor in a high-needs school are usually selected because there is nobody else to act as a mentor. Without the professional development needed, those teachers that are selected as a mentor can unknowingly pass down deficit thinking and negative stereotypes of certain students to their mentees. By providing schools with active mentor programs with mentors that have received professional development may be a way to help bridge that gap of those teachers leaving and those teachers staying.

Ethics

Within this research, ethical issues will be taken into consideration. First, all participants received an explanation concerning the purpose of the study. Those that chose to participate in

the study were given a consent form (see Appendix F) in which participants verbally sign

acknowledging their voluntarism in the study. Participants had to verbally acknowledge their

willingness to participate because of the restriction from the pandemic. I fully disclosed and

explained in detail the research study with the participants before obtaining their consent.

Consent from the participants was ongoing throughout the study and not just acquired once for

research at the beginning (Cohen et al., 2007). The participants voluntarily participated in the

study, meaning that at any time, the participants had the right not to partake. I provided

pseudonyms for each of the participants using a first and last name to ensure their confidentiality

(see figure 3). I also provided a pseudonym for the elementary school and the school district. I

refer to the school as Bramble Elementary and the district as Grand County. I kept all the

interview audio-recordings from the participants in a password protected file on my laptop

computer.

Meaningful Coherence

Furthermore**,** I provided the participants with an opportunity to check the information that

was shared. Each of the participants received interim texts after the first and second interviews,

as well as when the documents were turned into field texts to provide feedback. Lincoln and

Guba (1985) refer to this approach as *member-checking*. Member checking will be used to

review interpretations drawn from the data collected, and rich, thick descriptions (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985) were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the stories reported (Lincoln & Guba,

1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Preissle & Grant, 2004). Transcripts and their narrative were

given to each participant to review for clarity and accuracy. Each participant read his/her

transcript and narrative, offered clarification, and verified that his/her experiences were

accurately represented in writing. Using member-checking in research allowed the participants to

ensure their information is being presented in a way that is accurate for those described in the study.

Summary

It is no secret that the teacher attrition rate is currently a topic of concern within education, especially among many high-needs schools. Time and energy have been spent at many schools to ensure teachers new to a school receive a mentor to help with the transition into the education world. However, very little research examines the experience of mentees in a mentor program and their needs toward professional growth. In reality, very little professional development goes towards assisting developing mentor programs to meet the individual needs of the teachers in these programs. A narrative inquiry was used for this research based on the idea that I examined the experiences of the mentee teachers. By using this methodology, I used the narratives from the participants to gain a better understanding of their pasts, present, and future behaviors through the stories they share. As a narrative inquirer, this study also allowed me to reflect on my own experiences as an educator and become reflective throughout the process. These stories provided further information into what teachers new to school experience and what support these teachers can receive to ensure they learn to swim rather than hold onto a life jacket and try to survive.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

When I began my study, I set out to understand the experiences of mentors and mentees within a mentor program. As I interviewed the participants, each experience was unique to those sharing their stories, yet I found myself relating to parts of their narratives. My hope for the reader is as you read each narrative, you find a little piece of yourself, too.

MENTOR 1: LIDIA

Just because you've taught at a school for so long, or you know the way of the school doesn't always mean that you're going to be the best person to turn around then and help someone else.”
-Lidia

Teaching & Mentorship Experience

Lidia is a White female who has taught for five and a half years. She began her teaching career at her current school and has been there for four years. Lidia worked at a different school in another district closer to home, where she was an interrelated small group teacher, for one year, then returned to her current school where she teaches third grade. Lidia became a teacher after almost failing out of college and realizing she needed to get her life together. Lidia buckled down in school and pulled her grades up to become a teacher after she researched her options and her mom explained the benefits of teaching.

Lidia's most memorable teacher mentorship experience came during her first year as a mentee. She described her mentor as someone who was extremely involved in the mentorship with her, even staying after school to sit and show her how to teach in detail. Having a very supportive mentor was especially helpful to Lidia since her administration wanted all grade level teachers to have similar lesson plans. She appreciated how her mentor answered questions that

arose concerning lesson plans, schedules, or classroom management. Lidia and her mentor became good friends which allowed them to build a trusting relationship. Building a strong relationship with her mentor gave Lidia the confidence to not be afraid to ask for help when it was needed. She also felt confident that her mentor supported her if issues were to arise between herself and administration. Although Lidia saw other teachers teach, unfortunately, she never had the opportunity to observe her mentor teach lessons. At her school, coaches served as the main support to come into classes and help rather than mentors.

Beyond her activities as a mentor, when thinking about her professional goals, Lidia describes herself as "not much of a planner and a person that is more of a go with a flow until she figures something out." However, she does not want to stay in the classroom long-term. Initially, she wanted to become a coach, but noticed coaches at her school are overworked and look exhausted because of administrative expectations. Recently she has considered becoming a Local School Technology Coordinator (LSTC) so she can help other teachers with technology. Her only other professional goal now is to finish graduate school so that she can make more money teaching. If she were to become an LSTC, she could use some of her experience mentoring to help teach other teachers various technology strategies. Lidia helped her mentee update from mostly paper-based lessons to incorporating more technology within her classroom; that experience could help her if she became an LSTC. Lidia stated, "So helping somebody with the technology component would help me build my confidence to want to move into that LSTC position."

During the pandemic in the spring of 2020, Lidia's teaching changed, noting that she did not use as much technology with her students while in school because of the lack of access to it. Teachers had to check out devices or reserve lab times and much of the time those slots were

filled. Since digital learning began, the pandemic forced her and her students to use technology more. Lidia found digital learning to be challenging to meet with her students to help them with their assignments and challenging to ensure she is keeping them on pace for the following grade level. An unforeseen blessing from being thrown into the world of digital learning was Lidia's ability to become more confident using various technology platforms. Lidia knows her future students will use more technology within her classroom because she increased their technology knowledge.

Mentorship Dilemmas: Lack of Confidence and Lack of Preparation

For Lidia, although she has taught for four years, she did not feel confident in mentoring another person yet. She describes qualities of a confident mentor as someone who has a good grasp on the workshop model, has confidence in creating student groups such as mixed ability groups, and someone who can make modifications for their students. "I just feel like that's what the teachers need is somebody like who truly trusts their abilities as a teacher, whereas like, I just wasn't there quite yet." Despite any number of years of experience, all teachers feel they need to improve in some areas in their practice and providing teachers a mentor no matter their level of experience is beneficial to all. Contributing to her lack confidence and preparation was being "voluntold" to mentor by administration.

When Lidia became a mentor, at first, she did not even know she was even assigned a mentee. She describes a day where the third-grade administrator popped into her room and told her the school has just hired a new third-grade teacher, and they thought Lidia would make a great mentor (Hobbs & Stovall, 2015). At this time, Lidia just returned to her current school after leaving for a year, so she felt like a new teacher herself again. Upon returning, her grade level

consisted of mostly novice teachers. Although Lidia had left Bramble Elementary for a year, she was now considered the most experienced teacher on her grade level, thus pushing her into the mentoring role. She was unsure how to help and mentor another teacher. Not only was Lidia trying to navigate her return and all the new teacher information, she also was trying to understand how to best mentor a teacher that was new to the school as well. At the time, Lidia had taught for four years, and her mentee was two years out from retirement. She never really understood what the role of a mentor was. "So for me, it was a challenge of like, trying to figure out okay, like, what do you truly need help with because I don't want to like, make you sit with me and give you information that you don't need as a veteran teacher," said Lidia. It was difficult to understand what the role of the mentor truly meant when assisting a teacher with so many more years teaching experience than she had.

Moreover, Lidia never received any sort of professional development or information regarding how to be a mentor, thus leaving her with a feeling of wanting guidelines on mentorship rather than being simply told that she was a mentor. Lidia asserts, "Just because you've taught at a school for so long, or you know the way of the school doesn't always mean that you're going to be the best person to turn around then and help someone else." One of her fears while mentoring was never genuinely knowing what her mentee needed from her (Ambrosetti, 2014; Russell & Russell, 2011). She spent a lot of time allowing her mentee to vent about their problems rather than genuinely trying to address her problems simply because Lidia did not know what to do or how to help.

My mentoring story resonates with Lidia's because she and I were both thrust into the mentoring role without ever properly being prepared. Our journey of becoming mentors are eerily similar in that both Lidia and I were placed into a mentoring role by administration

because we were the most experienced teachers on our grade levels. As I entered my fifth year and Lidia entered her fourth year of teaching, she and I both described feeling anything but experienced and that we were completely unprepared to mentor another teacher.

Further adding to Lidia's lack of confidence and preparation was the constant teacher turnover at her school. Lidia recalls her first year in the classroom and participation in a teacher mentorship program as very different from the current mentorship program. Although she still reads articles addressing classroom management within her mentor program, she describes her first year as more hands-on. This approach allowed for the mentees to break out into groups to work with mentor teachers on setting up learning stations or getting help with the math and literacy workshop model. She believed those activities not only helped teachers new to the profession but also teachers new to the school. "I understand why it changed because, you know, we had a mass exodus several years in a row now. So like, we're, trying to rebuild that strong mentor program that we had many years ago," said Lidia. With so much teacher turnover over the past few years, Lidia is nervous about what this next year will hold regarding stability among her colleagues. Due to the constant high turnover rate of the school, many of the teachers she defined as true mentors are no longer there forcing teachers newer to the take on more responsibilities. "Unfortunately, now at our school, we have newbies training the newbies basically." For schools that lack teacher retention, the constant hiring of new staff has adverse effects on both the staff and students (Dunn et al., 2017).

Additionally, building community within the school is essential for getting teachers to stay rather than continuously leaving every year. Lidia believes no one wants to be a mentor in their second year, when they are still trying to learn the curriculum standards. Due to high teacher turnover, many teachers are now entering their third year with the school, thus meaning

they will be eligible to transfer to another school after this year. Thus, building a healthy school climate is vital so that way, trust is made, and people will want to stay, allowing for the program to have competent mentors. She believes keeping those veteran teachers in schools is crucial when building a strong program. Like Lidia, I have also witnessed the high numbers of teachers leaving our school each year and the negative effects it plays on both the staff and students. For the staff members that remain at the school, more responsibilities are placed upon their shoulders because they are viewed by administration as the most experienced on their grade levels. Thus, leaving those teachers to take on additional responsibilities like mentoring, committee leaders, or grade chairs rather than given the choice. For the students, many begin to question if their teachers leaving each year is normal. I am asked each year by my students if I am returning the following year because many of their teachers have not.

Another struggle Lidia faced as a mentor and further contributing to her lack of confidence as a mentor was mentoring a veteran teacher. Lidia found finding the time to meet with her mentee extremely difficult. Unfortunately, there was no time set aside for the two of them to meet, so meeting was up to them to find time within their schedules, which in turn made it difficult to work together. Lidia states, "I think that's one reason, I don't feel like I did quite like a good job as a mentor because that's not the relationship I had when I was a mentee." Something that Lidia felt she and her mentee had in common was they both quickly become flustered. Lidia describes herself as being able to handle a situation unless several things are going on, then she becomes flustered. Becoming easily flustered also caused Lidia to feel she did not do a good job mentoring. She thought she would help her mentee with things like her grade book or showing her how the email worked. Lidia's mentee was considered an exemplary teacher in previous years, and other teachers came to her for mentorship leaving Lidia to feel

unsure of how to assist her best. However, since her mentee was a veteran teacher, Lidia was hesitant to help her because she did not want her to feel as though she was stepping on her mentee's toes and telling her what to do.

Some of the help Lidia did attempt consisted of tasks like understanding the grade book and modifying lessons since each school has their unique way of planning. Her mentee came had a gifted teaching background, and Lidia felt she had a difficult time teaching student who were not in the gifted cluster. Lidia worked with her on modifying lessons so that her mentee could teach all her students. Finding the balance between modifying lessons and teaching at all levels is challenging for some teachers, which can cause students to become bored or misbehave in class. Lidia tried to help take the lessons her mentee had and alter them so the students felt successful and would not shut down.

Although Lidia assisted her mentee with behavior management to the best of her ability, she was not prepared to in her role as a mentor to provide help with this specific topic. She thought her mentee had several students with behavior issues and students who were academically low in her class. Often students who under perform academically are considered behavior problems because the work is not modified based on their needs causing students to act out or misbehave. Lidia tried to help her mentee on positive reinforcement because her mentee's class had rough behaviors. Lidia believed her mentee was given the short end of the stick because she was hired after the school year started, so the other grade level teachers hand-selected her class roll. The third grade numbers were high and it was determined that, another teacher was needed for the grade level. Administration asked the third grade teachers to choose a mixture of high and low students based on their test scores to be placed in the new class. Lidia thought the teachers selected the new class based on low test scores and behavior issues. She

believed the administration trusted the third-grade teachers and never really looked over the class list before providing the class to the new teacher. Her mentee's class was full of behaviors and she struggled to keep the students under control, causing her to end on a Teacher Professional Plan (TPP), causing Lidia to start working with her closely on behavior management.

Unfortunately, Lidia believed her mentee was placed on a TPP unfairly based on student's test scores. Between the behaviors in her class and students that were performing academically low, the test scores were never where administration wanted them for her class. They stayed after school and played back some of the student behaviors allowing her mentee to tell Lidia how she responded. They also worked together on a better way to approach addressing student behaviors.

When assisting her mentee with student behaviors Lidia again tried to the best of her ability to help her mentee with was her tone of voice when speaking with students. However, due to the lack of preparation provided to Lidia as a mentor she did not know how to provide constructive feedback based on how her mentee spoke to her students. She described her mentee's tone of voice as either extremely sweet or over-the-top mean. Much of the time, her mentee responded to situations in a way that sounded like she was harshly yelling at her students. In reality, her mentee was frustrated and could not figure out how to solve all of the problems that she had in that one room. Lidia suggested she try to find a balance so that her mentee's tone did not sound like she was always yelling at her students. Lidia stated, "It was things as simple as like, a kid just refusing to line up when they asked or refusing to come inside, but then there were some extremes like the kids, um, like stabbing another kid with a pencil, stuff like that." Lidia believed her mentee did not know how to respond to the behavior issues and struggled the whole year to gain control of the class.

In the beginning, Lidia offered help and assistance, however, because her mentee constantly threatened to quit, by mid-year, Lidia began to avoid her mentee because of her negativity. With her mentee struggling, Lidia hesitated to give her advice knowing her mentee was already struggling with the TPP. "I'm sure if those kids could have been broken up in another way, it really wouldn't have been that bad. Unfortunately, her entire class was a behavior problem...like there were only three or four kids in there that were sweet." Once Lidia noticed how her mentee often spoke in a harsh tone to her students, Lidia began working to keep a calm voice when speaking to her own students. All too many times there are teachers who are struggling to stay afloat, and their schools do not provide the support for their success which directly affects student success. When teachers are not provided the support to flourish and left to flounder, students are negatively impacted (Helms-Lorenz, Van de Grift, & Maulana, 2016).

In the beginning, Lidia collaborated and provided her mentee with advice on classroom management; unfortunately, as time went on, she noticed her mentee became increasingly bitter. Their relationship then turned into her mentee venting, putting out fires, and trying to make her mentee happy. Lidia admitted that she began venting to one of her grade-level colleagues because she did not know how to handle the situation. Lidia's mentee threatened to quit, saying she had doctor's notes concerning her health and made comments about talking to Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE). As a mentor, Lidia was not prepared to handle a situation where her mentee was continually threatening to quit. Lidia's assistant principal (AP) eventually even stopped checking in on her mentee, and all the responsibility of dealing with her mentee fell on Lidia's shoulders. Lidia ultimately had to separate herself from her mentee because of her level of negativity.

Eventually, word got around the school that this new teacher was negative, causing the special areas teachers to gossip about her and the grade level to avoid her. Lidia stated, "I mean by standards, it was a rough class. We tried to work on the positive reinforcement, and she would get it...she'd do it for a second or two. Then when you have another fight break out behind you while you're dealing with this particular fight, it's tough to keep your cool, so it got around the school that all she did was yell and that she was mean. I tried to talk to people, and I tried to explain the situation. Eventually, even I just shut down. It just got really out of hand." As stated in Chapter 2, in school environments that do not provide a strong mentor program in place or a mentor pairing that lacks active collaboration, potentially turn into *judgmentoring* (Hobson & Malderez, 2013) or even informal hazing (Catapano & Huisman, 2013). Judgmentoring is further described by Hobson and Malderez (2013) as confusing evaluating with mentoring and judging new teachers instead of providing support in the form of helping new teachers grow professionally. Rather than providing new teachers with the guidance needed to show growth, some mentor teachers have the responsibility of assessing their mentees' performance, which can lead to passing judgement (Hobson and Malderez, 2013).

Mentorship Improvements: Coaching vs. Mentoring and Mentoring Guidelines

Having served as a mentor, there are several suggestions Lidia makes to improve the mentorship program such as mentoring guidelines and understanding the difference between coaching and mentoring. Having something simple like a checklist so the mentors know what to discuss with their mentees is beneficial. When Lidia found out she was selected as a mentor she said, "My mind just went a mile a minute when I found out I was a mentor and trying to figure out like, what conversations should we have like, what, what do I need to teach this person? So I just say, something simple, I think would have helped me kind of know-how to help them." She

believes especially as a mentor working in a Title 1 school, having conversation guidelines for teachers working in a low-income school to learn how to teach the diverse group of students in their classrooms.

In addition, mentors need to have different guidelines when working with brand new teachers versus teachers new to the school because their needs are different. She did not know how to support her mentee without any proper professional development, leaving her to just make it up as she went. She also discussed changing the program to allow teachers that are interested in mentoring to volunteer. With Lidia's school having a high turnover rate among its teachers the past few years, the teachers have been left with a more "voluntold" situation when selecting the mentors. When teachers are "voluntold" by their administration for a role, there is not as much buy-in leaving a feeling of resentment for receiving the additional responsibility.

Furthermore, the new principal at Lidia's school brought a packet with talking points for mentors and mentees, but without having the mentor included in the mentor meetings the discussions fell on the shoulders of the mentors and mentees during their own time. Mentors and mentees need a designated time to meet because when meetings were left up to Lidia and her mentee to figure out a time, meetings were inconsistent. Currently mentors do not attend the monthly mentor meetings and Lidia believes inviting them to the meetings could provide the time needed for them to meet. Mentors could also benefit from attending mentor meetings because the meetings can focus on building the relationship between mentor and mentees and concentrate on areas of growth.

Although Lidia has taught for five years, she would still benefit from having the support of coaches to provide help on modifying lessons or model lessons. That one-on-one support that

coaches give is helpful. However, as a mentor, finding the time to provide one-on-one time to sit with her mentee is extremely difficult because of various meetings or conflicting schedules. Unfortunately, Lidia gained more support as a mentee in terms of influences on her teaching practices than when she was a mentor.

Moreover, there is a stigma associated with receiving support among some experienced teachers because they feel their way works and they do not need help. However, Lidia believes coaching support is more readily provided to new teachers rather than experienced teachers. The lack of coaching support for experienced teachers leaves Lidia feeling a sense of jealousy for how easy it is for the new teachers to receive coaching support. Lidia knows she would benefit from having coaching support as well as another new teacher. The new teachers might receive more support because not only are some of them brand new, but also common lesson plans are an expectation by administration at her school and coaching is a form of professional development to ensure all teachers understand the common methods required. Common lessons are the school's way of getting the teachers to conform. She thinks she could use help teaching certain subjects and would benefit from coaching support. She described how coaches work with both new teachers and teachers new to the school to check-in to make sure their lessons look the same as their neighbor's lessons. She also asserts that coaching support is assigned to teachers with low test scores. Lidia states:

> Those of us who've been at the school for a few years, if our scores were there, I think the assumption just became, oh, they are a solid teacher...they know what they're doing because their kids are passing tests. Whereas somebody new that comes into the school, might not have that data on them. So, the administration feels like they have to keep a closer eye on them to make sure that those scores are where they need to be.

Unfortunately, test scores are often used by measure the success of a teacher (Popham, 2010). As Lidia states, a teacher is seen as successful at teaching by their administration if they can produce high test scores, but when a teacher is not producing high test scores from their students, the quality of that teacher's instructions comes into question.

Opportunity for Cultural Proficiency

Lidia recalls one of her most significant challenges teaching during came during her first year when she struggled to keep up with pacing guides. Her school has common lessons, but she failed to realize just how important it was to keep on pace with the rest of her grade level. She usually has the English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESOL) and Special Education (SPED) cluster, so her students needed more time on a particular skill or concept. However, based on the school pacing, there was very little time for students to review standards before moving onto the next standard. Another dilemma Lidia faced was modifying lessons or activities for her students in the ESOL/SPED cluster, especially when planning reading. Finding a particular book on various Lexile levels that meets the needs of her many students was challenging. She believes modifying lessons can be easier, whereas reading is much more difficult because there are more lesson resources for both teachers and students. "I've taken a book and tried to like dumb it down so that it fits a certain Lexile level because I can't find it on a lower level." Working with her mentee did increase Lidia's knowledge of the social studies content because her mentee had taught the social studies standards previously, she had lesson ideas and activities to help make social studies more interactive for her students. Mentors can use the interactions made with their mentees to positively influence their teaching practices (Putnam & Borko, 2000) although the relationship between the mentor and mentee is lackluster. Teachers have students at various levels in their classrooms and finding resources to meet the needs for all students can be difficult

which can make teachers lack confidence. Without proper professional development or support from the district, teachers must rely on themselves to figure out ways to create resources for their students.

Furthermore, the only time Lidia thinks about the cultural background of her students is when she is explicitly teaching something in social studies. Having discussions around race or culture can be awkward when her students ask questions like, "oh, well would I have be in your class a long time ago...and I always just want to be like, of course, you would, but it's like, no, unfortunately, you wouldn't be and then it is like, it's like, why wouldn't I be." For example, when students bring up the topic of attending school during segregation, she finds the subject difficult to address with her Black and Latinx students as a white female causing her to either avoid talking about it. As a white female, teaching students with different backgrounds other than hers is not different than teaching students who are also white, but can be awkward when answering questions pertaining to social studies regarding historical events like segregation and enslavement or even sometimes when speaking with parents because of the language barrier.

She has considered her cultural background sometimes when making instructional decisions for her students. For example, when she was younger and struggled with math, and she was provided a tutor to help with her understanding of math too. She sometimes uses the strategies her tutor taught her to assist her students when they are struggling with math. Lidia relates getting a tutor when she was younger as a way of informing her instructional decisions. Other than that, she believes cultural background does not influence her instructional practices at all. Lidia asserts to teach in a diverse classroom, a mentor program needs to provide professional development for the teachers to learn the variety of resources the teachers can have access to when teaching lessons to their students. She believes students in a low-income school need more

hands-on experiences, so the school needs to have more resources for those students to create those hands-on experiences. For example, when she noticed there were not a lot of science resources for third grade, her principal was quick to get those resources for her grade level. Thus, she thinks a mentor program needs to incorporate professional developments where the mentor shows their mentee how to use resources like fraction bars for math lessons or materials for science experiments. That way, both new teachers and veteran teachers know how to utilize their resources within their classroom best.

Furthermore, Lidia believes there needs to be professional development for the teachers to understand the role of a mentor. Even if teachers volunteer to mentor, they still may not understand what it means to be a mentor. "I think the problem is, I still don't even to this day, understand what the job of the mentor was." By providing professional development on how to mentor either a new teacher or a teacher new to the school would have helped her better understand how to mentor rather than her just trying to figure it out for herself. The training should also include teaching in a culturally diverse classroom within the mentor program even though the background of her students is not something she thinks about often on her own. "I might be one of the only people that does not take culture into consideration because I do just kind of treat all the kids the same." Many teachers probably think about the cultural backgrounds when planning lessons and that some type of professional development to address culture is necessary for her school so that the teachers could address the needs of their students.

When considering the school climate, Lidia's school struggled in the past implementing culturally relevant practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995). She recalls an incident with an administrator when Lidia was dealing with a student behavior in her class. She buzzed for

administration to get support, but the administration told her to fill out a protocol sheet. Lidia said:

> I had been told one time because we had the sheet that you follow, and if a kid hit another kid and they hit back….um, yeah, it wasn't an extreme fight. But like, to me, that's the definition of a fight. And then I remember being told by one of the AP's that it wasn't a ghetto fight. And I was like, what do you mean a ghetto fight? And she was like, that's not a fight. She was like, yeah, that wasn't a fight-fight. She was like they weren't like fist blows or anything. And I remember being taken aback by that because I was just like, what just happened is still not okay, and they wouldn't do anything whereas this year I feel like though, I didn't hear something like that. If something happened, administration took it from there….like, we support you.

The administration takes behaviors a little more seriously this year, which in turn has made her and other teachers feel more supported. Although administration is addressing more student behaviors, they are not discussing the problem which is the lack of professional development for the faculty to implement culturally relevant practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Although Lidia feels the school climate has improved, she does provide an example of a student who was misbehaving in another teacher's class in the previous year so that teacher put their desk in the corner to avoid dealing with the child. The child later became Lidia's student told the parent they were thankful that Lidia did not treat her child that way. "I'll never forget it. Her kid came in one day with a giant smile. Immediately apologized to me, saying that he was going to have a bad day and I was like, why do you think that he was like because every day was bad for me last year like I was, I'm the bad kid, but he wasn't. He just needed somebody to show

him, hey, you're capable. You can do this." Lidia believed most of the teachers who are negative are no longer at the school. She felt at least one of her coworkers does a great job of keeping in mind the students' backgrounds when dealing with students and helps Lidia by reminding her of how their home lives can influence their behavior in school.

MENTOR 2: NAOMI

"There needs to be mentorship resources on emotional and cultural awareness. I think those are two pieces that are missing. You get it in the undergrad or graduate school, but I think it would help to come from somebody that is in the classroom setting and has more experience with it." -Naomi

Teaching & Mentorship Experience

Naomi is a Black female who has been teaching for eleven years. She has taught grades first and fifth as a classroom teacher and then has taught kindergarten through fifth as an interrelated resource (IRR) teacher. She has only worked in her current school district. However, she has worked for three different schools within that district. Naomi has a dual teaching certification in early childhood education and special education. She worked as a summer camp counselor several years ago with a little boy with autism who was nonverbal. As the little boy's grandmother dropped him off at camp, Naomi struggled how to help him. Naomi began researching ways of teaching the little boy with speaking, and by the end of the summer, he was able to say bye, and hi when he came in, leaving his grandmother feeling appreciative. "Helping the little boy just made me more interested in special education and just teaching altogether because I felt like it was a big accomplishment." When Naomi began teaching, she was assigned the inclusion classroom, which she enjoyed because it allowed her to work with students that are in both Special Education and general education. Having the inclusion class also provided her the opportunity to see the big jumps in learning the students made from where they started to where they ended.

Naomi assisted her mentee in several areas including: (1) modeling lessons, (2) managing student behaviors, (3) using an action research project to implement small group lessons, and (4) professionalism. She recalls her most memorable mentoring experience when she was working with a first-year teacher by modeling lessons to help her grow based on the ratings her mentee received from her supervisor. By the end of the year, her mentee received better ratings based on the strategies Naomi helped her mentee implement in her classroom. Naomi felt like working with someone who listened to her advice and who was not afraid to ask questions was very rewarding. Naomi had to make the effort and time to meet with her mentee as there was not a designated time for them both to meet. Although finding time to meet was difficult. Naomi modeled lessons for her mentee based on her needs to improve instruction. Naomi thought it was important she approached or initiated communication with her mentee and that her mentee did not always come to her.

Naomi modeled lessons that her mentee found to be difficult. "So I would come in and teach her class. She didn't come and watch me teach my class, but I would watch her. I would teach her students, and that was a kind of an ongoing thing throughout the school year," stated Naomi. Sometimes she modeled how to teach specific content lessons while other times her model teaching was based on what Naomi saw in her mentee's class that she felt needed improvement. She did not model repeatedly but instead modeled lessons or classroom management strategies for her mentee once. Thus, letting her observe, lessons like a gradual release method found in teaching preparation. Naomi and her mentee set up modeling lessons together and was not part of the school mentor program.

In the beginning, Naomi felt her mentee had a lot of behavior problems in her classroom, so Naomi assisted her when coming up with a classroom management system. Naomi helped her

mentee focus on positive behavior but also provided consequences for the students when they were not following the classroom expectations. Naomi has become more aware of how she implements lessons and interacts with students by while working with her mentee. She thought she should "practice what she preaches" to other teachers. For example, Naomi advised her mentee to use a particular behavior management system, now she does not yell at her students then Naomi, too needs to implement those practices in her class, even if nobody is watching. "I told my new team, you know, don't yell at your students, because they are people as well. Then I make sure that I'm doing that regularly. I am pulling my students to the side or telling them, you know, go take a timeout, and we will talk about it when we have some time to ourselves so that it's not in front of everybody else." Naomi has become much more conscious of the way she talks and interacts with her students due to mentoring. She also learned behavior management ideas from her mentee. Naomi noticed her mentee had sitting spots on the floor for her students to sit on and a doorbell in her classroom to smooth transitions. Naomi has since implemented both of those ideas in her class. As stated in Chapter 2, both mentors and mentees have found mentor programs to be beneficial to their teaching practices. Mentors found that participating as a mentor allowed them to reflect on their teaching practices, whereas the mentees found the mentor program to help increase their knowledge of classroom/district/state assessments (Mathur et al., 2013).

Furthermore, based on her consistently low scores, Naomi's mentee wanted to figure out a way to make improvements, and this is how the action research project came to fruition. Naomi worked with her mentee on an action research project to increase the language arts scores for the non-Dual Language Immersion side of the grade level. Based on the data, Naomi, her mentee, and two other teachers from the grade determined students' greatest language arts need was and

how they could make the most significant impact on the students' language arts scores. Naomi and the teachers involved in the action research project came up with the ideas for small group instruction for remediating and enriching students over 18 weeks, where they took two different data points based on the district assessments. After implementing the small group instruction, Naomi and the other teachers came together to discuss the findings. Some of the strategies implemented during the action research project included giving students more time to take assessments, exposing students to different assignments online, and teaching them how to annotate text.

Moreover, as a mentor, Naomi assisted her mentee with professionalism by encouraging her mentee to attend any of the "Y'all Come" sessions where other teachers shared knowledge and expertise on a range of teaching topics. Attending those sessions was vital for her mentee to build her professional capacity (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) in the building by forming relationships with other teachers who were not just on her grade level but throughout the school. Naomi also pushed her mentee to step outside of her comfort zone by reaching out to others in the building for help on various subjects. In turn, Naomi believed this helped her come out of her shell and gain more confidence as a first-year teacher, especially when it came to the pressure of dealing with imposter syndrome. Naomi had to help her mentee understand that she would not know everything her first year teaching, nor would she be expected to. Naomi felt that once her mentee became more comfortable with the idea of making mistakes and that being a continuous learner is part of the profession, then she became more comfortable in her classroom and trying out new strategies. She believed professionalism can include interacting with the staff or colleagues. Naomi has read books about interacting with others and wants her mentee to know

that if they are continually interacting negatively with a colleague, that is considered a lack of professionalism.

One of Naomi's professional goals is that she would like to learn and share what she has learned with others. Sometimes Naomi keeps newly acquired information to herself; she does not brag and sometimes assumes others already know the information. She wants to push herself to speak up and share her knowledge. Naomi journals daily to reflect on her interactions throughout the day. She admitted that occasion she has learned something new or had an idea and she did not share it. For example, she said, "I saw a teacher that was in need, but I kind of just kept walking. So I need to be mindful of if I see a teacher in need, then I need to know, maybe stop in my tracks and take some time to have a conversation with them." Naomi thinks teachers do not want to appear arrogant and therefore, do not share their expertise. Teachers are not always respected for their knowledge which causes many to second guess themselves or refrain from helping other teachers in need.

Another professional goal Naomi has set is she would like to continue working on her emotional fortitude when she addresses the behaviors or actions of others with which she disagrees. She describes emotional fortitude as letting them know when she has a disagreement and she provides them an alternative way of handling the situation. For example:

> I noticed that a teacher is dealing with the student, and they're embarrassing the student by calling them out. I will usually walk by and be like, Whoa, okay, well, that's not my business that's not my students, but in actuality, you know, they're all our students. So I need to start by pulling the teacher to the side later and say, hey, maybe that wasn't the best way to interact with this student. Maybe it would be best to try this next time

because I noticed that by looking at them, they weren't responding, or maybe it hurt their

feelings. Or even if I noticed that somebody's just not doing something correctly, and

we've gotten guidance on it. Just saying, hey, do you need some help with it because I

noticed that you were doing in one way and we were told to do it this way."

Naomi believes when teachers begin to hold each other accountable for their actions, both

teachers and students benefit.

Furthermore, Naomi works to improve upon the idea of emotional fortitude on a small

scale within her classroom first and then by working with her colleagues. It is more difficult "to

call people to the love" and have those hard conversations of recommending coworkers improve

actions or behaviors. So she begins by implementing emotional fortitude in her classroom that

can help her feel confident to implement it on a larger scale with her colleagues. Thus, being a

mentor has helped her to develop emotional fortitude because she has been able to speak up and

provide colleagues with constructive feedback. Being a mentor is more than just overseeing

someone, but rather it is about helping them grow into a strong educator and develop their

professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

During the pandemic of the spring of 2020, teaching lessons on a computer was

challenging because, Naomi was not sure if the students were completing the work or if their

parents were completing it for them. Digital learning also forced her to find more resources when

teaching online. She felt online teaching pushed her intellectually, which simultaneously wore

her out. For example, Naomi said assigning students online quizzes was challenging because she

had to wait until the students finished the quiz to receive performance data on that task so she

could use the data to move on to the next. As an Interrelated Resource (IRR) teacher prior to the

pandemic, Naomi conversed daily with her nine students, but because of the public health crisis, she was consistently in contact with only three students. Although Naomi has reached out to parents, she has unfortunately never been able to reach some of her class. Naomi had conversations with responsive students that were not just about academics, but she also asked them about their mental state to see if they are mentally in a good place. In a way, teaching online has been nice because she has been able to learn more about her students rather than only focusing on academics. Naomi explained, "I get to see what they have going on at home, like one student was showing me his chicken." Naomi believes education needs to be about educating the whole child but focusing on the entire child is difficult in schools because there is always a schedule that the teacher has to stick to or a certain amount of time to teach lessons. Teaching online has given her more flexibility to have conversations with her students that are not just academically related, but on things outside academia, too.

Mentorship Dilemmas: Time and Teacher Voice

In the past, Naomi's experience as a mentee involved, sitting and reading an article. Reading articles during mentor meeting were not always applicable or did not help her. One of Naomi's biggest challenges as a mentor is the lack of resources provided to mentors, leaving the mentors in a state of not knowing how to begin mentoring (Ambrosetti, 2014; Russell & Russell, 2011). Naomi states, "Then you can only go off of the experiences that you have had and try to use that and kind of add what you learned along the way." She has had to draw on both good and bad experiences to help her as a mentor (Lortie, 1975). For example, she needed to provide her mentee with time to meet because when Naomi was a mentee herself, she needed more time from her mentor. On the contrary, Naomi learned how to be a good listener and how to help her

mentee with resources. As a mentor, she needs time to make both the positive and negative experiences relatable and meaningful for her mentee.

Naomi feels like one of the biggest dilemmas with teaching is how her meetings replace her planning time, it has become a time to have meetings. Teachers need time for planning, reflecting on previous lessons, and making changes to their lesson plans; however, that time is more often than not taken away just and replaced with meetings. Another teaching challenge is not having her voice heard. Sometimes teachers are asked for their input by administration or the district, but then this input is missing from in the outcomes or decisions made. For example:

> With small groups, you're thinking about, what's best for your students, and you're told to do what's best for your students. You say, well, I want to do what's best for my students, because this is, you know where they are. But you're still told no, everybody has to do the same thing. And it's like, but if we're doing all the same thing, we're not meeting the needs of our students. It's not about lowering the bar. It's about, you know, providing those, I guess, accommodations that the students need to get to where they need to be. But we're not heard."

Sometimes it feels as though the curriculum is a one-size-fits-all model and teachers are not necessarily trusted to know what is best for their students. Sometimes it also feels like administration and the district ask teachers for their input simply to make teachers feel like their voices are heard, but ultimately they are not.

Mentorship Improvements

As a mentor, Naomi has several suggestions for improving mentor programs. Here suggestions include: (1) mentorship curriculum, (2) mentor pairings, (3) mentor incentives, and

(4) mental health. One of Naomi's biggest suggestions for improving mentorship programs is to start providing the mentors and mentees with a curriculum to follow. The curriculum should be fluid and can change based on the needs of the mentors and mentees. She asserts the professional development for the mentor program needs to be more than teachers simply reading articles on mentorship topics. Incorporating some journal articles into the mentor programs is beneficial, however, she suggests that the focus shift more to self-care for teachers and educating the whole child. Many teachers do not understand that teaching in a low-income school involves more than academics. "There need to be mentorship resources for emotional and cultural awareness. I think those are two pieces that are missing, you get it in the undergrad or graduate school, but I think it would help to come from somebody that is in the classroom setting and has a little bit more experience with it." In the next section, Mentor 3 Ramon, acknowledges how he received little to no professional development on working with impoverished students. He admits he took some classes in college, yet no additional professional development was provided to help him in working at a low-income, high needs, school. Much of the information he obtained working with students in impoverished schools was told to him from other teachers through a deficit lens causing Ramon to associate impoverished students with a lack of parental involvement, abusive situations, living in a lower economic area, or having parents that work multiple jobs.

When schools fail to address these common misconceptions, teachers bring these deficit and negative ideas with them to their classrooms about certain populations of students, and these misconceptions can unknowingly be passed down from mentor to mentee (Kardos & Johnson, 2010) or even passed throughout the faculty. As schools and districts continue to turn a blind eye to the prejudices and biases teachers enter their classroom with, then their students will perpetually be in an oppressed state. For teachers that are working in low-income schools or with

students that are culturally different than they, continuous professional development needs to be implemented by both the school and district to help address any biases or prejudices we all bring with us.

Furthermore, Naomi says, "the school needs to address the cultural awareness piece because addressing race and culture starts with the school administration at the school." A mentor-mentee setting can be an opportunity for teachers to interact with one another and discuss race and culture scenarios in a safer context rather than during a staff meeting in front of large group. Additionally, Naomi asserts there should be designated meeting times for the mentors and mentees at least once to twice a month. She is aware of how difficult meeting times can be for the mentors with their mentees and, therefore, it is essential that a time needs to be set aside for these teachers to attend. This may place more accountability on the mentors to ensure they are meeting with their mentees through the curriculum. However, she suggests using some type of checklist or a way that allows the mentors to stay mindful they are checking in and what specifically they are helping their mentee with.

Another suggestion for mentorship improvements is that mentors need the ability to volunteer to ensure teachers are willing to mentor another teacher. She believes mentors should have some teaching experience because if a teacher has only been teaching for a couple of years, it can be difficult for them to take someone under their wing. Nevertheless, mentors do not necessarily have to be assigned based on grade level, but instead, mentors and mentees could be paired based on common interests. Schools need to get teacher buy-in or provide a perk for those who volunteer. For example, teachers can receive a stipend for mentoring or additional planning time monthly to meet with their mentee. It all starts with those teachers that are willing. It can be difficult for a teacher to volunteer to mentor because of all their other responsibilities. The role

of mentoring needs to be reexamined in education so that teachers do not feel that being a mentor is an additional responsibility they have to take on when they already have so many other responsibilities. For example:

> That accountability piece in education altogether is the weight. It is heavier for teachers. It's not as distributed like it used to be. So, a lot of teachers feel like I don't have time to take on a mentee. It's like taking on another responsibility. Like if I have some free time, I don't want to add a person into that free time. I don't want to help somebody else when I'm still trying to figure out how I can help myself make it through the school year."

Furthermore, in the next section Mentor 3, like Naomi, Ramon did not initially want to be a mentor and was volunteered for the position by administration. However, through being a mentor he established a strong relationship with his mentee and formed a bond that allowed he and his mentee to collaborate by constantly sharing ideas with one another.

Moreover, Naomi believes mentoring starts with the school leadership and that there needs to incentives or resources for mentors. For example, Naomi suggested an extra thirty minutes could be given once a month so the mentor and mentee can plan or observe each other. This would avoid those teachers having to put extra hours into their school days. In the end, creating a strong mentor program will take of teacher buy-in and/or teachers who are very passionate about building the capacity of others.

Naomi thinks mentor programs need to focus on incorporating a mental health component because teachers are held accountable more than other stakeholders in the success of their students' test scores. Naomi believes teachers are passionate and love what they do, but teaching can be overwhelming, leading to burnout. For example, "I would say a mentoring

program needs that mental health piece. Whether it's coming from a counselor in the school building, or bringing somebody in from the county just to kind of check-in with teachers to get a pulse on the school by letting them know how they could take time for self-care and that it's okay for self-care." Naomi insists if the administration take care of their faculty and staff, otherwise students do not get what they need, which in turn reflects poorly in the data. Unfortunately, the mental health piece is not considered as crucial by many within schools because teachers must be held accountable for their jobs. Naomi believes when leaders feel pressure to produce high test scores; teachers feel pressure as well. Focusing on the mental health of teachers starts with training the leaders to understand how to take care of their people. Training leaders to consider the type of incentives they are providing, how they are giving their teachers time, and what kind of professional learning they are contributing to their teachers' well-being. Then the teachers feel they can do their jobs successfully.

Opportunities for Cultural Proficiency

Naomi describes working with students with backgrounds other than hers as a learning experience. She enjoys working in a Title One school because she is continuously learning about other students' cultures and using those experiences in her classroom. For example, if she comes across a student who has a different religion than hers, is from a different county, and celebrates different traditions, she takes the initiative to learn more about their culture instead of making assumptions. In one experience, Naomi described a situation where she was communicating with the father of one of her students rather than the mother. This was new for her because she usually communicated with her students' mothers. This was important for her to realize that households have different points of contacts. Still, understanding what parents to communicate with allowed her to learn from the experience, leading her to now ask parents at the beginning of the year what

their home life looks like and what type of cultural traditions she needs to know about. Communicating with parents about their family traditions at the beginning of the year allows Naomi to find out more information regarding her students and their backgrounds and helps avoid troubling assumptions about her students and their families.

Moreover, Naomi grew up around a lot of different cultural experiences, which she feels has allowed her to be more open-minded. She grew up around different religions, different cultures, which made her equally passionate about them. However, as an African American, Naomi admits she gets very excited about Black History Month. Thus, when it comes to her teaching, she tries to be very aware of exposing her students to a variety of books and different authors by incorporating them into the curriculum or getting her students to talk about eating different foods. Her background has made her just be a little bit more passionate about everybody. Naomi recalls:

> I had a student one year that was a Jehovah's Witness, and even though you know, I'm a
> religious person, and I kind of understood some of the values I didn't fully know about,
> Jehovah's Witnesses. So when her mom would bring me literature about it, I would read
> it and, when I would speak with her, you know, I would kind of share what I learned
> from it, and she was very appreciative that I took the time to learn about their religion.
> When my student couldn't participate like in person parties and holidays and things like
> that always made sure to be very conscious of not making sure, she didn't feel like she
> was left out. But the student was mature to be a first grader. So, she said she didn't feel
> left out at all. But just being able to be more conscious about the way I went about things
> with her learning. I think they kind of helped me to be very open-minded because I

attended an elementary school that was of a different religion from how I was raised. So that helped out a lot."

With students so racially and culturally diverse, having a teacher that is open-minded and willing to take the time to learn about their traditions shows students they are valued as an individual.

Another example Naomi provides is incorporating books about Ramadan during the month of May because she has students that practice Islam. However, due to the pandemic, she was not able to include the books and articles she used to celebrate Ramadan this year. Around New Year, Naomi also likes to integrate texts and passages on the Chinese New Year. She pulls current event topics in with social studies because some of Naomi's Hispanic students want to talk about what is happening at the United States and Mexico. Hence, she tries to find articles that help her students understand current events, they consider relevant to their cultures. Naomi feels it is easier to integrate topics of culture within reading and social studies because she can find articles or nonfiction books that tie into what they are learning allowing students to become more interested.

Naomi believes there needs to be some type of culturally responsive professional development within mentor programs to help teachers understand their own assumptions and bias. Furthermore, there needs to be some type of professional development to understand the demographics of the school's students. For example, Naomi states:

I've only taught in Title One schools. I've done my student teaching and internships in schools where students came from higher economic backgrounds, but if I were put into one of those schools today, it will probably be a culture shock for me. So having

culturally responsive training is essential and not just one time out of the year. At least maybe every other month, depending on what the mentees say they need from it."

Naomi asserts that the form and structure of the development sessions all depends on what type of students the teachers encounter in their classroom. Some teachers want to learn more about working with students in poverty, while others wish to know more about students who are suffering homelessness. Regardless of the social issue, Naomi believes culturally responsive professional development within the mentor program is important. She suggests the professional development could start with a book study among teachers or reading meaningful articles with culturally relevant information that teachers can apply in their classrooms. She feels that even in affluent schools where only a small percentage of the student population is from low-income families, it is still essential to have those conversations surrounding race and culture. Naomi suggests teachers receive professional development on race and culture provided to teachers working in affluent schools so to address assumptions that all students in an affluent school come from a wealthy home. Many schools assume teachers know how to work with diverse children based on the courses they took in college. However, as the diversity of the students within our schools continue to grow, ongoing professional development is needed for teachers to best know how to work with their students (Zozakiewicz, 2010).

Moreover, Naomi believes establishing and setting the climate within the school starts with the leadership. When having uncomfortable or unwanted conversations about race and culture, leadership must provide teachers with tools needed to have conversations in a safe space. The principal needs to determine who they can bring in to make the staff feel safe talking about race and culture. Naomi suggests work in small groups to have conversations regarding race and culture, then come back together to discuss. Thus, can create an action plan to implement

culturally relevant practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995) in the school. Naomi believes teachers cannot just have conversations but need to enact culturally relevant practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995) in their classroom. So again, she asserts incorporating more culturally relevant practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995) starts with leadership. Implementing culturally relevant practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995) can begin with teacher leaders because a lot of times, teachers do not always know what they are not comfortable with, especially when it comes to topics regarding race and culture.

Furthermore, Naomi suggests starting with teacher leaders to create a school climate that values equity and justice given current regarding Latinx families being taken hostage at the border. She worries many teachers do not know how or if their students are affected. One way to support Latinx students is to read articles and stories that address this current event while teaching foundational reading skills. Having those critical conversations is beneficial for students provides them with the rigor both academic and real-world applications. Naomi admits teachers must be comfortable with teaching for equity and justice or with controversial issues, and it starts with the administration creating a climate that supports their staff to teach and using culturally relevant practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The administration needs to create an environment where their teachers know that having conversations regarding equity and social justice is not something taught separately but rather inclusively, no matter the school system or student population.

Within Naomi's class, she teaches her students to be open-minded by exposing her students to different cultures and providing information about them. The school comes together to share ideas and celebrate International Night, Black History Month, and Hispanic Heritage Month; however, it would be nice to see the school celebrate more cultures. She asserts

celebrating more cultures starts with the administration creating a school climate of embedding culture within lessons. Unfortunately, Naomi believes only a small group of teachers implement culturally responsive practices within their classrooms and that this is not practice embraced school wide. She understands that every teacher has different opportunities and responsibilities, but school-wide efforts are needed. For instance:

> We didn't know we had so many students with different languages in our schools. We always think Spanish, English, French, and Farsi, but then we learn about the other languages in the countries that other students are from, and we're like, well, I don't know anything about that. Like it's important. If that's a part of our demographics, then it's important. Maybe even at the beginning of the school year, leaders or teacher leaders can share some of this information. Leaders can even do some type of activity where the staff has to learn about the different cultures, and how it impacts our teaching, and how we interact with our students.

Naomi suggests maybe starting an after-school club where teachers and students display artifacts outside of their classroom to share information about various cultures in their classroom. Naomi thinks these are just a few small changes the school could take to incorporate culture such as a sponsoring a book club. Sponsoring a club and incorporating a culturally responsive book study with the staff could benefit the students.

Furthermore, Naomi explains most teachers receive some level of culturally responsive pedagogy content class as an undergraduate or teacher preparation student, but often there is no effort regarding culturally responsive practices thereafter. She is thinks culturally responsive

practices must be ongoing because our educational context is continuously changing. Naomi stated:

> I mean, there are so many new things discovered each day. We think about what our students are dealing with, what teachers may be dealing with, what they may not feel comfortable talking about or addressing. You have to have some type of culturally responsive training, even if it's not multiple times throughout the year, at least twice within a year. I think that's at least feasible. Because like I said, it's always changing. You have to continually learn, whether it's refreshing your memory or learning something new. It needs to be a constant topic of conversation in action.

In all her eleven years of teaching, she has only participation in one culturally responsive professional development, almost six years ago. She describes the professional development as learning to work with students in poverty, where the teachers had to put themselves in the shoes of someone who was impoverished. Although she does not remember the name of the professional development, Naomi recalls that teachers were given a name, an age, and an estimated background with a set of directions for the activity. The student may have to call the office to collect food stamps for their parents, and when they got to the activity stations, they were denied the food stamps because their family made too much money, leaving the family with no food. Naomi recalls many teachers were crying and said did not realize their students had to deal with poverty daily.

Naomi feels some teachers hold misconceptions when working in a Title One school because they know a lot of students come from low-income homes. However, teachers may see a parent drive a Mercedes Benz to school which causes confusion. Naomi wonders if in reality,

some parents do not know how to manage money. "So even maybe the small things that they may have, they may be like, I want to purchase a nice car, so that we're not driving around in something, I guess, for lack of a better word, like raggedy." She thinks most of the staff need to communicate high expectations for their students lowering the bar to make "education accessible" for their students. It is not the case that students from low income homes need less rigorous teaching. Although she received one culturally responsive professional development, she admitted that it was difficult for people to participate without biases and stereotypes. Thus, she believes providing teachers with ongoing professional development is essential because even though some teachers think they know about poverty, everybody's idea of poverty is not the same. For example, some teachers may assimilate homelessness with poverty while other teachers may assimilate student behavior problems with poverty. Naomi further suggests schools incorporate a cultural component in lessons and make it part of the curriculum standards. Leaders need to be in classrooms regularly to observe teachers having not only conversations with their students and their colleagues but incorporating culturally relevant practices. This cultural component is something that should be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure teachers in the school and within the district are receiving the support they need to continue to implement culturally responsive lessons.

MENTOR 3: RAMON

"I feel like, as her mentor, we ended up working out okay because we got along…but I didn't want to be a mentor when I was asked. I ended up being able to get along with the person that I mentored, so well, it ended up being alright for me." -Ramon

Teaching & Mentorship Experience

Ramon is a White male who has taught for eight years. He taught four years in Utah and four years at his current school. He has taught Spanish in a Dual Language Program, for the seven of his eight years. Ramon describes himself as very versed in the Spanish language and having a pedagogy for teaching in a dual language class. Before teaching, he taught a Sunday school class at church where he interacted with the young people, he realized his love for working with children. Ramon thought it better to earn paid money to teach rather than volunteering to work with children. Thus, leading him on his journey to become a teacher.

While in college, he began substitute teaching and working as a janitor at elementary schools. He did not give much consideration toward becoming a dual language teacher despite his own dual-language program experience when he was younger. However, while he was substitute teaching, his former elementary teacher called to let him know she was retiring and suggesting he take her job. He described their conversation as a weird awakening. At that point in his life, Ramon had not spoken Spanish for some time but decided to give the job a try. He took the language proficiency test, applied, and was hired. Speaking Spanish has become a considerable part of his life, even when speaking to his own children. Ramon speaks Spanish at home and at school with his students. Spanish has become a large part of his identity.

Ramon learned to speak a world language because of his background in Utah and as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, also known as Mormons. Living in Utah, there were several Dual Language immersion schools because many of the students' parents learned a world or second language while serving a religious mission in a county. Ramon explained the difficulty of learning German at age 20 in a German speaking country versus taking a dual-language class as a six-year-old. "That's the biggest thing that my church teaches us, you can love more of God's children when you can speak to more of them." He believes he is a teacher because he wants to serve and love more people.

Ramon recalls his most memorable mentoring experience was as a mentee himself. "When I was a mentee, I feel like my mentor, uhh, basically saved me," stated Ramon. He struggled coming to a new school district. He found the school was rigorous and he also had family responsibilities at home. He described himself as not emotionally stable, which caused him to grapple with the demands and expectations placed upon him from the new administration. However, Ramon's mentor made him feel welcome by helping to improve and shape his practice. Any time needed help, she was there. Ramon's mentor was always offering to assist, and to him, that was extremely beneficial. His mentor showed him how to create work-life balance because, for Ramon, it was difficult not to take the stress of school home.

Now that Ramon is a mentor himself, he focused the beginning of the year on showing his mentee how to get to the special areas classes and the location of the grade-level meetings. Every school and every district have a process for entering grades, working with students in the gifted program, and understanding the SST process and he helped his mentee navigate those processes. He did not assist his mentee with pedagogy necessarily, because they both had taught several for years. His help consisted of familiarizing her with Planbook – the district digital

lesson plan platform - to understand how to copy lessons and scheduling, and to make sure she was up to date with the events happening in the school. Ramon also helped his mentee with entering grades in the grade book, analyzing standards, and keeping her in the loop of scheduled meetings. Since his mentee had taught for over ten years, he did not think she needed help with teaching, but he rather prioritized understanding specific procedures for school.

Ramon describes his professional goals as wanting to get better every day, which in turn will make him better for his students. He wants to work on his organization, which will allow him to become more prepared, and in turn, his students will respond better. As of now, he does not have an end goal in mind, but instead will just figure out what he can do today that will be better for his students in the classroom. He wants to continue to stay in the classroom and teach. Being a mentor allowed Ramon to practice communicating to his mentee, which helped him with his professional goal of becoming more organized. He said, "Being able to see what's going on in somebody else's classroom and compare it to what's going on in my classroom and be able to talk out what you're doing, then that helps. I mean, that helps everybody." Ramon believes he was lucky enough to find someone that he became friends with while being a mentor.

While teaching during the pandemic in spring of 2020, Ramon tried to make his lessons short, so the lessons were easy for his students to understand. The various distractions his students encounter learning online ranged from pets to their siblings and their parents was challenging. Thus, caused him to lose his student's attention rather quickly. He tried to condense his lessons to a manageable online time that was not overwhelming for his students. Unfortunately, digital learning did not allow Ramon to get personal with his students because lessons were taught through videos or Zoom rather than in person as he prefers. In some cases, he had students reply to his discussion posts saying they miss him while other students did not

log on, leaving Ramon to wonder if they had technology issues or if they simply did not care. For some, it's not that they can't get on; it's that they don't care when they have mentioned they don't care in our conversations. Ramon does not particularly like this type of schooling because if he is not able to see or speak with the child, then they are kind of on their own to learn, causing him to wonder if those students are completing assignments and learning the material.

Mentorship & Teaching Dilemmas: Mentor Relationship and Collaboration

Ramon thinks that one of the biggest challenges with mentoring is establishing a good mentor relationship. Both the mentor and mentee need to be compatible. Otherwise, the mentoring relationship may not work out. Ramon believes it is a challenge to pair mentors and finding teachers who work well with others. For example: "I feel like, as her mentor, we ended up working out okay because we got along…but, I didn't want to be a mentor when I was asked. I ended up being able to get along with the person that I mentored, so well, it ended up being alright for me." Teachers must be selected to mentor based on their willingness rather than being "voluntold" by an administrator. There is so much responsibility placed on teachers, that asking him to mentor added something to his plate leading Ramon to not want to mentor initially.

Despite his reticence, since both he and his mentee were in the dual language program, pairing them together was seen as a good fit by the administration. Although Ramon did not want to mentor, he and his mentee developed an extremely collaborative relation where they were always on the phone talking and collaborating. They collaborate frequently while working in the Dual Language Program together, they translate the student work into Spanish. For example, Ramon and his mentee review the science text and decide together what part of the book is essential for the students to learn and then translate the text to Spanish. Both Ramon and

his mentee were on the math planning committee this year, so they analyzed standards and wrote lessons together. Collaboration played a considerable role in Ramon and his mentee's relationship. The way that Ramon and his mentee planned was very connected to support their students:

> Sometimes, with science, it's like okay, we like this article. I'm going to translate the article, and you translate the questions. Okay, well, I don't like this question. So I'm going to make my question, and we'll divide up the work, and we'll look over each other's shoulders, and we'll be doing our own thing, even though it's the same thing. Then with math, it's okay, we need to make sure that this word problem looks like this.

Although Ramon has conducted only a few observations of his mentee's teaching, he knows what happens in his mentee's room because of how closely they collaborate when they are planning their lessons. Ramon and his mentee are constantly texting each other ideas and pictures to incorporate within their classroom. Sometimes his mentee will text him a picture of an anchor chart she made; Ramon then shows the picture to his wife as she can help him recreate the anchor chart. When creating posters for his classrooms, Ramon stated, "I'll make two of them. I'll just make the same poster twice and give one for her to keep and one for myself. The fun part is that it's supposed to be in the English classroom too. So I'll sit down and make four, two in English and two in Spanish just so that the four classrooms have them together." Ramon and his mentee worked closely together creating a truly collaborative relationship. He even joked they became each other's therapist by being able to voice grievances and celebrations. Ramon and his mentee's relationship is one where both were willing to learn from one another and formed a relationship that allowed growth (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Although Ramon did not initially want the role of a mentor, he has recognized that being a mentor is so much more

than simply showing the new teacher how to create lesson plans. Instead, mentoring is about creating and establishing a relationship and in Ramon's case, establishing a strong collaborative relationship where both he and his mentee benefitted significantly (Catapano & Huisman, 2013).

One of Ramon's biggest dilemmas as a teacher is having to take a small group while the rest of the class is working on independent activities. He wants to help everyone but understands that helping all his students at once is not physically possible. He also finds managing his preparation for station work while also working with a small group to be challenging. It becomes overwhelming to plan a lesson for the whole group, a small group, and then lessons for the students that are not working in the small group difficult to balance. He understands the planning of those lessons is just a matter of taking more time to prepare all the materials needed. However, finding the time to set aside a couple of hours on top of his responsibilities as a teacher to work on preparing materials each week can be hard. Ramon also wants to work on teaching to his visual learners. He believes that he teaches more to auditory learners in his class and after seeing his mentee teach visually, Ramon wants to improve in that area. Although Ramon has taught for several years, he knows there are always areas he needs to improve upon as a teacher. In one of the upcoming sections, Mentee 3 Rakel, asserts that as a 15-year teacher new to a school her needs are vastly different than that of a beginning teacher. Her opinion is similar to Ramon's in that mentors should not just been assigned based on teachers new to a school but also assigned based on individual need.

Mentorship Improvements: Mentor Matching and School Climate

For mentoring to work, Ramon suggests teachers must be open-minded. Just like when working with children, teachers need to be willing to work with adults and be open to receiving

new ideas. If both mentors and mentees are not willing to work with others, then they will not get anything done. Ramon stated, "If you find somebody that's not willing to work with somebody else, they're not going to actually mentor…you're not gonna learn anything from them as a mentee." Ramon's mentee is not new to teaching. In fact, she has been teaching for several years, and Ramon has learned new teaching strategies. He describes his mentee as a very visual teacher. She has a lot of anchor charts with an explanation both drawn and written so her students can visualize see examples as she explains. Ramon notices his mentee always seems to know her students' misconceptions before they have them, allowing her to provide specific examples to address misconceptions. He says, "Okay, well, we know la suma, which means addition. Well, we know it's addition, and we know we're putting it together because the way that she has it put together on the poster and she has her clue words for math. If you put it all together, it's probably an addition problem." Although Ramon is the mentor, he has learned new strategies he incorporates into his own teaching because both his mentee and he were open to learning from one another. Rather than only assigning mentors to teachers new to a school, mentors can assist teachers no matter their years of experience. This way, teachers are being utilized for their area of expertise but also receive assistance for their specific needs to help them grow this profession

Something else beneficial to include in a mentor program, especially at a Title I school, is professional development on how to work with impoverished students. Ramon never really received professional development on working with students at a Title One or low-income school and working with students who are impoverished was something that he had to learn along the way. There were no classes he took in college on working with students who are impoverished, so understanding how to best teach students from low-income areas was something he had to learn while working at his school. For example, during his first year at

Bramble Elementary, his grade level asked for a long list of school supplies from the students. He wondered why the students needed to bring in so many school supplies. Another teacher told Ramon that many of the students did not have an idea of the importance of school supplies like glue sticks because they use their glue sticks so quickly, thus requiring the teachers to have to ask for more on their supply list. In previous years I have had to ask for numerous glue sticks on my supply list, but not because I think my students do not take care of their supplies. With the access to technology inequitable, I printed all materials my students needed to be successful in their classes to help them learn the content and had them glue it in their journals causing my class every year to run out of glue sticks by winter break.

Furthermore, another teacher working with Ramon explained to him that some of the students in low-income schools probably are not getting a meal when they get home, which helped him understand his students' circumstances better. He was told that some of his students might not see their parents when they get home or until the weekends. He believes he can understand his students better now because he does not necessarily know what their home lives are like. Ramon did not know if a child was going home to an abusive parent or if a parent was working multiple jobs, so his knowledge about living in a lower economic area mostly came from other coworkers. It is important to understand the students not only within the school district but also in the school in which he teachers.

Even more important, a mentor and a mentee need to understand the school climate and the students in their classrooms and what their lives are live. For teachers that are new to the school but not new to teaching, they need to understand the student population at a Title One school is extremely important. With many of the students going through difficult situations at home, it is important to remember that guidance works better than punishment when students

misbehave. Like Ramon, I did not have much experience working with students from a low-income area and how social situations are connected to economic circumstances. During the first few years of teaching in a low-income school, my perceptions of my students were formed based on the opinions of other teachers. Whether those opinions were knowingly or unknowingly formed in a deficit manner, only seeing certain populations of students in a negative light rubbed off on me until I began to view my own students from a deficit view (Thomas-Alexander & Harper, 2017). For teachers working within impoverished areas or with diverse student populations, schools and districts need to provide professional development for teachers to understand the culture of the school better but also address their own biases before working with their students (DiAngelo, 2018). All teachers come to teaching with some form of bias, it is human nature and something we cannot avoid, the degree to which these biases exist vary. However, in this school district, little to no professional development is provided to teachers to help them understand how to best address their own biases toward race and culture but also how-to best support students from low-income areas. Thus meaning, many teachers bring their deficit views of their Black and Latinx students, whether knowingly or unknowingly, into their classrooms every day and further perpetuate an oppressive system.

Opportunities for Cultural Proficiency

Ramon's current school has a high population of Latinx students. He further states, "I think something in America we do often is we just think Hispanic, and that is we viewed as one culture. Many different countries speak Spanish and each culture has their own different thing." He has become more culturally aware with what he says when speaking Spanish because an offensive word could be interpreted differently or even offensive in one country is not in another. Becoming more culturally aware has made him learn to become very precise with his language.

Spanish in Argentina is very different from Spanish in Mexico, which could lead to the difference in something being inappropriate, offensive, or even funny. When working with students from different backgrounds, he realizes he just needs to be open-minded and precise in what he says. For example, in Ramon's normal life, he would not use a sports analogy, but because he knows many of his Latinx students like soccer, he tries to find ways to connect with them through interests such as this highly popular sport.

Ramon further describes how his religious background differs from almost everyone at his school. He has learned about other religions by talking to his students, who are mainly of the Catholic faith. However, once he found out what the Catholic Catechism was and how important it was when his students turned eight, he realized he needed to take a few minutes to celebrate with those students to show how much he cares about them. Ramon stated, "I want to like, hey, if you went through Catechism, then congratulations, let me know and I'll see if I can show up. I'll see what I could do to help honor you as a person, and help you understand it is a big deal because if it's a big deal to you and your family, then it's a big deal to me too." Ramon believes that as it is part of his upbringing and his religion to love everyone for who they are, which has shaped how he is as an educator.

Furthermore, the one lesson he was taught growing up was to bring the knowledge that you have and learn more. As part of his religion, he believes whatever people's knowledge is, he wants to help improve knowledge. "So just adding more to what people know and just make what you know, bigger and bigger and bigger because that's something that you can do in education." He believes teaching students in different ways to find which way works for that student's learning is essential as a teacher. Through working with his mentee, Ramon acquired new strategies for helping students visualize their learning. As stated in Chapter 2, well done

mentoring allows for educators to learn collaboratively among other teachers and engage in meaningful dialogue, which can provide both the mentees and mentors with an opportunity to reflect on their practices (Catapano & Huisman, 2013). Within his classroom, he tries to teach his students about the impact they can make in society in hopes that knowledge can help the bigger school-wide culture and climate, which will then help his students be successful outside in school and life.

MENTEE 1: BREANNA

"Mentors cannot assist teachers in having conversations on race or provide help for mental health when mentors themselves do not have the tools to deliver those services."

-Breanna

Teaching & Mentorship Experience

Breanna is a female who comes from two different cultures. She identifies with both the Hispanic and African American cultures and has taught for seven years. Her first year teaching was at a charter school in Houston, where she taught sixth and seventh grade. Breanna initially began teaching sixth-grade reading and then moved on to teach seventh-grade reading. After moving to a different school district in Texas, Breanna taught fourth grade for a couple of years and fifth grade for a year. She then moved to her current school, where she teaches a fifth-grade self-contained class. She enjoys fifth grade because it is an excellent medium between middle school and lower elementary. With teaching both fourth grade and middle school, Breanna knew where her students were going and where they were coming in, so it made understanding fifth grade a bit easier from both a curricular and developmental aspect.

Breanna became a teacher because it was important for someone from her dual background and as a woman to be a role model for others and to show her students that she can relate to them both racially and culturally. She enjoys helping kids reach their fullest potential and creating opportunities to show them life goes beyond the content by having purposeful conversations about what is happening in their lives outside of academics. Those are the moments that matter to kids and having conversations is what they will remember. "It's just really trying to make sure that if I could leave any mark on this world, it was to tell you that

yeah, your content is significant, but your education is even more important. I like to give those types of conversations to kids just like those mentorships as well." For many people in Breanna's family, education was a challenge. For example, her parents did not go to college until much later in life after they had Breanna and her brother. Much of Breanna's family did not attend college, so when Breanna was accepted to college, she thought to herself, "This is a perfect segue into telling those kids who feel education is just not attainable, it is attainable. It doesn't matter what your parents, grandparents, or what your siblings are doing; you have a huge stake in your future. I just wanted to tell our students that as much as I could." In other words, encouraging her students to think about education beyond high school is essential for Breanna as a teacher.

When Breanna worked in Houston, at her first school, that school's sole goal was to get children to college, and she enjoyed feeling that she was a part of something where at the end of the year the middle schoolers would see the high school graduates and where they were going to college. "They would show the college they were going to and it was powerful to see these kids come from immigrant families or families who just had low-income statuses to that kid holding up their pennant and they're going to UConn or the University of Houston so it was just a great feeling to see it. I wanted to be a part of that, too," she stated. Since Breanna is new to her current school system, she has kept quiet this year because she wanted to get a feel for what the school district was about. The overall camaraderie in a school begins with students as young as kids in kindergarten. Breanna admits that some people may wonder why it would be essential to start talking to kindergarteners about college instills the value of higher education for when they get older. Speaking to children about college instills the value of high education for when they get older. Most of the time, Breanna believes schools focus on content and getting kids to pass an

exam or district test. Still, there should be time to formulate a mentality of what it means to obtain education later in life, and that goes beyond what they are doing right now.

During Breanna's first mentorship, one of the first pieces of advice her mentor gave to her was, "Do not show fear. When I say fear, I mean, don't feel like you can't be yourself with the kids." This advice helped Breanna with her classroom management because when she first began teaching, she thought if she had specific rules and expectations, then her students would listen to her. Once her students realized there was a purpose behind the expectations; it changed the dynamic of their relationship. That advice still resonates with her years into her teaching career. Breanna realized she does not have to be a strict individual stemming from her military background. Instead, she learned to show the heart and human side as a teacher. Her students can relate and understand when things go wrong that instead of receiving a consequence, they are provided an opportunity to learn that was the expectation and they must adhere to them. Students begin to learn the expectations and they must adhere to the,

When Breanna was in Texas, she worked with her mentor on classroom management to formulate a better way to execute routines and procedures. From the beginning of the year, her mentor helped her so she would not have issues throughout the school year, and that was powerful for Breanna. Breanna noticed that if her routines and procedures were secure starting in August, then the rest of the year went smoother. Setting student expectations taught Breanna to be honest about her teacher expectations and to make sure that she had a system in place for when she needed to reel a child or her class back in again and address an infraction. Breanna has had situations where a student did not want to do what she asked, and she learned early on not to make a scene in front of the class. Instead, she had a private one-on-one conversation to see if their behavior can be changed. Breanna thinks sometimes children are seeking attention from the

entire room. Once the teacher does not give it to them and the child realizes the teacher is not fazed by what they are doing, the student figures they should do what they are supposed to be doing. Breanna believes all students should receive respect and consistency. For example, if a teacher pulls one kid out to talk to them, then that teacher needs to follow the same process for the next kid. Those routines and procedures have helped Breanna strengthen her classroom management.

While still in Texas, she had the opportunity to watch another English Language Arts (ELA) teacher teach reading. She was fortunate enough to participate in a co-teacher partnership where she team-taught in which it became a one-teaches, one-observer model. After Breanna watched how her partner teacher presented lessons on the novels students were reading and related essential skills, it prompted Breanna to change the way she viewed reading. Initially, Breanna thought reading was about giving students a passage, "going through it," and that was how students learned to read. However, Breanna learned that authentic reading lessons use a real piece of text, anything like a novel or article. Breanna and her partner teacher began to play tag team where they bounced ideas off each other with which the students connected and taught as if they were in a book club. As part of the partnership requirements, Breanna's partner teacher observed her while teaching and gave feedback based on the novel lesson they were currently teaching.

Furthermore, Breanna found it was beneficial for her to watch her mentor teacher teach. She then mimicked what her mentor did in her classroom. In instances where she observed a procedure or lesson that she did not like or that would not work for her students, she would alter it for her class. Observing a master teacher was influential to Breanna. For example, regarding classroom management and working with students, there is always a right way and a wrong way

of dealing with them. During her second mentorship, she disliked her mentor teacher's use of sarcasm toward students, it sometimes went too far, and became mean spirited. Thus, showing Breanna a teacher's tone or the words a teacher uses can potentially have a negative effect on students. Thus, she learned to avoid sarcasm when communicating with her students.

Another memorable mentorship experience included moments that allowed Breanna and the other new teachers to discuss their feelings because many of her previous mentorships focused heavily on learning the content and preparing for deadlines coming up. Those other mentorships never provided reflective moments for Breanna to process how she was feeling or doing as a teacher. She does not recall in previous years, as a teacher, the administration asking about her feelings, which made it pleasant this year to sit down and discuss her feelings. "Even something like tell us using a meme that describes how you're feeling right now. It kind of showed the human side for teachers who are new to a district or just new to the profession, because it showed that someone in the building cared. That was important to me," said Breanna. Teaching is a job that prides itself on being collaborative, but when it comes to speaking about teacher's feelings, the conversations tend to fall short, leaving teachers with a sense that they are not important. More discussions centered around how teachers are doing, and their feelings need to be had so that teachers do not feel alone and believe their only option is to walk away from this profession.

Breanna's professional goals are to have kids think about attending college after high school and understanding life beyond the content. When Breanna first taught science and math, she realized the students just took those subjects at face value and did not think beyond them, for example, how fractions are used outside of school. Breanna's whole purpose is to help kids

understand having an education will benefit them later in life and to teach them the importance of higher education. Until she began teaching, Breanna realized a lot of kids had difficulty making connections between their lives and what they learned in school. So as long as Breanna can teach, she wants kids to think beyond the classroom and understand how to apply the curriculum to their own lives. Breanna remembers asking her students this year how many of them had ever been to Atlanta to see something in the city like the Ferris wheel. Although Breanna has ridden the Ferris wheel, she could not believe how many of her students said they have never been to Atlanta. For example, "I was like, wow, you're not even being educated culturally around and about your city. So I hope that is something that I can instill in kids in my career, to go beyond what's in front of you and see the world to see how this all the stuff we're giving you will take you places." Unfortunately, much of the curriculum taught in schools is not relatable to students, so teachers need to find ways to make the content accessible through pulling in the students' background knowledge which means getting to know your students.

Breanna believes it is connected to what a parent thinks is essential, so for her, traveling and creating experiences is more important than material objects for her child. As a parent, she takes her daughter to the local aquarium or parks. However, some parents differ and believe it important to give their child an electronic device and take them to the mall for shoes, that should be it. It just really comes down to what the parent values in the household. Despite potentially having limited access to resources, she believes parents must make an effort to educate their child beyond what is in the house and what is on TV. Breanna did not realize so many of her students had so little exposure to the world around them.

Breanna enjoys teaching students with backgrounds different than her own because she feels that education is more prominent within their families. Breanna saw a vast difference in

kids that were in an environment where they received support from their home versus those who did not, and the importance placed upon education. She observed a shift between teaching a majority of Latinx students and/or African American students because she only had a few super-involved parents from those groups, but a majority of them were not. However, students identify as Asian or white and of the same socio-economic status, came to school bringing their extra A-game due to their responsibility to get their education emphasized at home. When Breanna worked at the charter school, she explained:

> We had a lot of people who were Asian and different backgrounds, but a lot of them were working-class or lower-class, but their parents had businesses or something. So they saw their parents working hard. Then when I went to a different district, I had all different kinds of kids from different backgrounds. That same socio-economic status was the same, but they still saw the importance of education and that it matters in the cultures that were a little bit different than mine. So I think that it's just what the parent cares about and what the kid goes home to.

Working with students from various socio-economic status and racial backgrounds shows Breanna that education is valued differently among her students and their families. Exposing her students to the option of higher education continues to be embedded in Breanna's professional goals as an educator in the hope that she can show her students that nothing is impossible.

Another professional goal that Breanna has set for herself is to improve her use of technology in the classroom. She would like to get to the point when she can help other teachers understand more about technology or software and web design. Breanna envisions herself working in the realm of instructional technology in the future. She loves to support and to help

teachers unlock their creative side, particularly with their lessons and how they present curriculum to their students. Breanna has always been interested in technology; when she initially studied in Houston, she thought she wanted to be a diagnostician to test kids to determine where they fell on the spectrum. Quickly Breanna realized that she would not enjoy it. Now, Breanna can be found at home on Canva or blogging as a hobby. She believes it would be neat to use those skills and share them with other teachers. Another piece of advice that Breanna's mentor ever gave her was to, "Do what you love, don't do what you think would just get you an easy job in education because then it doesn't become a passion anymore." For example, Breanna loves blogging on the computer, photography, and web designing. If she had become a diagnostician, which is what she originally planned on doing, she doesn't think she would have enjoyed testing kids all day long. So, she had to remind herself about doing something she is passionate about, not just a job. By being a teacher, she has been to take her passions of technology, introducing her students to higher education, and have conversations that benefit mental health and incorporate them into her job.

During the pandemic in spring of 2020, Breanna noticed keeping track of her students was challenging, and teaching online was not as great as she initially thought digital learning would be. Her biggest problem was that she wanted to do all these great lessons, but then only 11 of her students would show up to her Zoom classes. Having the same 11 students show up to her Zoom class every week became stressful because she did not know what happened to those other eight or nine students. She then began to search for her missing students. Then it came to the end of the school year, and she still had not heard from several of her students, yet they were still enrolled, but Breanna had not been able to communicate with several of her students. It left her with a feeling of helplessness. "So you're kind of in a bind as far as like, did you fulfill your

teaching obligation to that child because, you know, they just kind of went MIA [missing in action]. Um, so I think it's been rough, to be honest with you." Breanna used communication tools like e-mail, Class Dojo, Google Voice, and others that are specific to the school district to see if the child has been logging on. She tried various types of communication tool, but even after all those attempts, it has been challenging to get kids to do the work on digital learning. Breanna has also had several other students without a computer or not being able to complete an assignment because they are doing it through their phone or a tablet. Some of the apps do not work, and Breanna feels like the whole digital learning experience has been a mess. As a teacher, when her humanity kicks in and she just thinks everyone is going through a lot, and so she has no choice but to kind of let them go onto the next grade level without really knowing what they know, thus pushing the college goals a little further away.

Given the prevalence of technology, Breanna admits the various platforms in the same class can be challenging, for example, if a student is using an android and a student uses an iPad, it is more complicated when the platform the teacher uses is only compatible with a laptop. Thus, keeping track of student's work becomes very troublesome because of their lack of access to the technology platforms. Furthermore, Breanna had to figure out the best way to grade assignments her students submitted, knowing some of her students lacked access to technology. For Breanna, grading became more about whether her student attempted the assignments rather than accuracy. Like Breanna, I too, struggled with the lack of compatible devices and grading for digital learning in the spring. Many of my students were unable to access specific assignments because of the device they were on, which led to questions on how to provide a fair grade? The lack of the technology supplied to families in need during such a fragile time only further amplified the inequities that remain in our educational systems today.

Digital learning strained Breanna's relationship with her students because conversational Zoom classes with them were not as enthusiastic as when they were together face to face in class. That in-person connection and the physical presence makes a difference when forming teacher-student relationships. Breanna had classes where she asked her students how they are doing or asking her students to talk about the reading lesson, and she just kept silent, increasing her wait time for a response. The students asked every week, "When are we returning to school and explaining how they do not like this." She continued to try to have conversations with her students centered around their mental health rather than just focusing on academics. Still, meeting with her students is complicated when she cannot contact several students. Over the past few months, Breanna asserts the world has come to realize just how talented teachers are and how much their presence makes the difference in children's education.

Mentorship Dilemmas: Individual Needs and Teacher Voice

Breanna's most significant challenge with teacher mentorship was not necessarily knowing when to ask for help but that she instead pretended to not to need assistance. Breanna suspects sometimes teachers act like they have it all together because they do not want to appear weak or that they are incompetent similar to imposter syndrome. However, it does not matter if a teacher is a rookie or a veteran; many teachers still struggle with asking for help. It can be tough for teachers to ask for help, but if they just put their fear aside, there could be a more robust community amongst educators. Teachers are each other's strongest allies within the education profession. For example, when Breanna first started teaching, and she was teaching sixth-grade reading, she realized her entire college coursework had been on Elementary and Special Education. Understanding how to teach middle schoolers how to read a novel in-depth and understand particular literacy skills was difficult.

Thus, Breanna, broke her rules of silence and seeking an ally and help, asked her partner teacher at the time how to teach reading. By observing her partner teacher, Breanna was able to understand what reading looked like when teaching a child to read for authenticity and pleasure rather than teaching letter recognition. "So it was really hard to kind of make that mind shift of making this child realize that when you read this book, you're reading with fidelity, you're reading to internalize it. Asking for help helped me because I knew how to present reading to kids a little bit better." By asking for help from a colleague, she was able to grow as an educator in an area she felt needed improvement.

Another challenge Breanna faced was when she left her first school and went to a different school district within Texas. Even though she knew the state testing standards, it was difficult to understand what precisely the district wanted in regard to lesson plans and classroom management. Whenever Breanna made a mistake, the other teachers would say that she should have known better.

But it's like no one told me. It felt like she's been doing this for so many years, so she must understand to some extent. It didn't feel like I had an opportunity to have a conversation with this person that was my mentor; easily, it just became like, well, you're just kind of on your own. So I just had to kind of learn things on my own, and I'm glad I did to an extent because it helped me just realize, like, you're not always going to have that helping hand everywhere you go. But then at the same time, I kind of felt like well, my year would have been a lot easier. If you just told me instead of me trying to figure everything out. For example, I can recall one time. There's just a specific way that we were supposed to fill out these Special Education documents, and I was doing everything how I did before I came to that district. Everything was on the computer, but I was like,

oh, well, no, you have to fill out this binder as well, and I didn't know that, and no one

had told me that so here I am right before Christmas break, the Friday we're supposed to

get out. Everyone's gone. I'm at work filling out this paperwork because no one explained

to me how to do it. So it was really frustrating for me.

In other words, Breanna would have benefitted from having someone in that school who

provided guidance and or school procedures despite her years as an experienced teacher.

Unfortunately, in Breanna's current school, she did not know her grade-level

mentor until almost halfway through the school year. However, Breanna carried the

lessons she learned from her experiences in Texas and applied them in her current

classroom. Once she figured out who her grade-level mentor was, their mentorship

revolved around teaching the content and curriculum. She and her mentor would

collaborate using Breanna's previous content knowledge from the Texas curriculum and

then made it work with in Grand County. Although Breanna's mentor was aware of her

role as a mentor, Breanna wonders if her mentor thought Breanna did not need much

help. Breanna had taught for more years than her mentor; still, when she learned she had

a mentor, she thought it was great. However, most of their conversations consisted of

content discussions. Still, Breanna felt she already had an understanding regarding these

structures, so she and her mentor did not collaborate beyond content knowledge,

expectations, routines, and procedures. She already had an understanding regarding these

structures, so she and her mentor did not collaborate beyond content knowledge.

Breanna's mentor made an effort to establish a relationship, but they never reached a

point where they just had conversations about teaching. Instead, their relationship

revolved around grade-level meetings and location during the planning time making it difficult to establish a relationship.

While teaching at her current school, Breanna has struggled to find her teacher voice. Working with so many expert teachers, Breanna does not want to step on anyone's toes and struggles to contribute ideas to the faculty. Breanna believes sometimes other teachers do not care about learning something new because that was not the way the lessons are done at that school. Sometimes, she admits, she does not push her new ideas anymore. Still, instead, she used the lessons of classroom management ideas from her previous schools in her classroom or with a few other colleagues with whom she had formed relationships. For most of the year, Breanna spent the majority of her time in this district an observant because she did not know people that well, so it was difficult to form relationships. Every teacher entering the profession brings some type of experience, yet teachers tend to conform to their current surroundings and leave their previous experiences behind. Like Breanna, I transferred school districts during my teaching career. I found that in moving to a new school district I was even more challenged to find my teaching voice. After only one year, I was still unable to conform to my new school district, I retreated to Bramble Elementary to be more comfortable and dealt with the longer drive time. My other colleagues constantly told me while in that district, "This is not how things are done here," but was rarely shown how to do it the way they wanted it. I remember feeling so out of place and unwanted as a teacher, which made my working environment challenging. Like Breanna, I found working in a new district lonely at times because I could not figure out where my place was or how I could contribute to that school as an educator as someone new to the district.

Another dilemma that Breanna has faced is that Grand County uses performance pay. She does not agree with this policy and says the money should pay all the teachers more and give more resources, so all kids improve. She thinks if the district removed performance pay, it could open the door for more collaboration and allow teachers to have open conversations about what they can bring to the table to make all kids learn better. The vibe from other teachers in planning meetings was selfish, "What can I do to make MY particular kids better? What can I do to MY particular kids to pass this threshold of this particular assessment?" Like Brenna, I have also experienced the adverse effects of the implementation of performance pay. Rather than motivating teachers to come together to collaborate for the well-being of students, performance pay promotes isolation. I have also witnessed teachers withholding lesson ideas from colleagues in hopes their students perform better on benchmark tests. Hence, their students benefit while other students do not, which allows those teachers to produce "good data" and qualify for the performance pay. For a district that promotes performance pay and celebrates certain teachers based on "high" students' test scores, they do not realize test scores do not depict the whole story of the hard work of all the teachers.

Furthermore, when Breanna was in Texas, everyone on her grade level taught the same lesson, so it was easier for the teachers to collaborate and have conversations about how they could all collectively help the kids show growth in learning the curriculum. In Texas, she did not have a sense of, "this resource is for MY kids, not YOUR kids." Breanna asserts that if the school district removed performance pay, teachers would have parity, which in turn would allow the teachers to speak more openly about their resources and skills. She believes all kids would be better off because the teachers would not feel the constant pressure from the county to produce "good data."

Mentorship Improvements

Breanna is an experienced teacher and has taught in various places in the United States. She has several suggestions to improve mentorship programs: 1) instructional coaching vs mentoring 2) multiple mentors and 3) racial and cultural conversations. A mentor should be someone who displays care by volunteering for the role rather than being selected by administration based on years of experience (Hobbs & Stovall, 2015). Breanna wishes administrators changed their view toward mentorships to be more holistic. Mentorships are not just for logistical tasks such as grade books or district portal access. "You need someone to help you with difficult situations. You need someone to give you advice based on what they see. You need a neutral individual in the building to help with that. I think if teachers saw that I'm doing good by helping this person because they're struggling, not like they just need me because I was assigned to you. I think that would change the way mentorships are looked." Mentor programs can provide mentorships that can be the saving grace between the administration and the teacher.

Moreover, Breanna believes mentors are important and that teachers need them no matter where they are in years of the educational experience. Whether a teacher is new, or they are someone who thinks they might know everything, it is crucial to have a mentorship with someone who is an expert in the school readily available to share resources and advice to people who may be struggling or just wanting to talk. Breanna wishes schools would put more into mentorships for all experience levels. For example, there should be a mentor for veterans, rookies, and those in the middle of the road. There should be someone for everyone.

As such, teachers have different professional needs, Breanna asserts a mentor is different from an instructional coach because a coach focuses on improving teacher's content (Showers & Joyce, 1996). She recommends a mentor coach for the teacher's overall well-being, and that having a coach solely to focus on the teacher would make a big difference with teachers' mental health. Breanna has worked with instructional coaches, and they are excellent for understanding content and instruction. However, when she needed help on classroom management, the conversation stopped. The coach was either unable or unwilling to support her in that area. Breanna reads a lot of blogs about teachers' mental health and teachers' well-being and she finds a lack of support, especially in the schools, to improve teachers' overall professional experience. A guidance counselor does not always understand a teacher's perspective, so the overall well-being support for teachers must come from an empathetic person. This mentor must be willing to help a teacher by going into their classroom and assisting with the needs of that teacher. It could be anything from aiding in classroom management, modeling content lessons, or taking care of a teachers' mental health. More than one mentor may be needed to meet all the needs of the teachers. Therefore, it would be beneficial for mentees to be matched with multiple mentors to gain assistance on any area they want to develop.

Moreover, every school should have a built-in support system for those teachers who may be at their breaking point and feeling as if their only option is to leave the profession. Breanna has seen schools try to have a support system, but it ends up just being a coach or mentor teaching lessons for the teacher. Instead, a mentor needs to guide classroom management, model lessons, assisting with teachers' mental health and giving suggestions on how that teacher can improve. Breanna recalls that anytime she has been observed by an instructional coach, the conversation always goes back to data. Rather than getting to the real root of the problem, which

could include a stressed-out teacher or difficulty with a particular group of kids, instructional coaches look for ways to diagnose an issue in the content or pedagogical strategy. Breanna believes coaches look at follow through with the lesson cycle rather than considering a teacher's demeanor. With the role of an instructional coach to focus on data and instruction, the teacher's well-being may fall behind. Schools might see more relaxed teachers if they were not so overwhelmed and worried about data. Still, Breanna asserts that nobody is ever focusing on the teacher, which in turn contributes to teacher turnover. She believes teachers do not trust that anyone truly cares about them. Breanna has watched many great teachers walk away because they feel they are not a valued individual in the school building.

In school, the assumption is if teachers are bringing positive data, then all is well. Thus, if teachers are not delivering "good data," and those teachers look stressed out, then administrators complete evaluations based on what that teacher is not doing well in the classroom. Education has to change because teaching is the stepping-stone and foundation for students to accomplish so much in life. She is appalled that teachers are not held to high regard like other professions. Having conversations and better professional developments about mental health for teachers would be beneficial for the overall school. Moreover, there needs to be a complete overhaul with how society views teachers. Much of society does not respect teachers as professionals, but instead, there is a stigma of laziness or professionalism attached to teachers, which includes having summers off and coloring all day. By incorporating more professional developments around teacher's well-being and mental health, schools can begin to grasp how to assist administrators and teachers on how to be successful in the educational field.

Furthermore, she says mentorship should change so teachers were assigned a mentor based on grade level or a mentor per year of teaching. Some teachers have been teaching for

years, yet still need someone to help them and would benefit from having a mentor. However, some veteran teachers do not see the benefits of having a mentor. Instead, those experienced teachers reject support, perhaps out of pride, when the mentor is there to help and assist in an area of weakness. With education continuously changing, being an expert on everything in education is challenging. A mentor is someone who can help teachers with changes to grow in the profession. "I think it should be separate from an instructional coach like it needs to be someone who knows the ins and outs of teaching and knows how to help that teacher, you know, make those decisions that are difficult or figure out how to talk to someone better. You know, a lot of teachers probably don't know how to talk to their admin team, like they get frustrated or emotional. So someone should be there to help them know how to handle those complicated situations that we face in education sometimes." Sometimes an instructional coach is provided to a teacher as their mentor, but the roles are different and, therefore, should be assigned separately (Showers & Joyce, 1996).

When pairing mentors and mentees, Breanna believes pairings should be between persons who are relatable, easy to talk to, are knowledgeable on the ins and outs of the district and content, but also can handle stressful situations. A mentor should have enough experience to have dealt with a variety of situations to be able to help other teachers and navigate difficult conversations. A mentor should be someone that can be a good listener and willing engage with a mentee since many teachers do not have someone to talk to or get advice. Breanna thinks that a mentor should almost be a therapist in a sense by being someone that can help solve problems for educators.

Furthermore, for a mentor to be helpful in a classroom with students of color, they need to be willing to have hard conversations about what they know about different cultures, racism,

and their own biases. For example, when Breanna was in Texas, she and her mentor teacher were from entirely different cultures. Her mentor explained her painful experiences with particular cultures, and that it damaged her perspective such that it prevented her from connecting with that specific culture. "So her advice to me was, sometimes you just have to work through those experiences, whether they be bad or good, or indifferent and remember just to see the child and don't see like maybe that really poor experience that you had before," said Breanna. Having conversations about race, culture, and biases as adults, Breanna says, is healthy because things do not change if teachers do not have those discussions with each other. It starts with the teachers because whatever a kid hears when they go home about different cultures, they bring that to school. Family ideas about race and culture have a direct way of influencing how kids treat individual teachers and each other. Breanna believes if teachers were more open to learning about their students' backgrounds, they would have a better way of reaching all kids. She suggests having monthly conversations or more frequently centered around race and culture, especially for new teachers, but all teachers would benefit. If teachers had an open forum and a better way to communicate with one another about race and cultures, then it could allow teachers to realize emotions they did not even know they had. By having safe spaces that enable dialogue regarding race and culture, teachers can begin to unpack their own biases they bring to the classroom and ways to work through them. She says that just because a teacher lived in this world for 30-plus years, does not mean they know everything about each race and culture.

Moreover, teachers may also have very different experiences with different races and cultures. People need to take the time to have conversations centered around race and culture, consider their personal experiences, and plan how to mitigate those experiences to help their

students improve. It is beneficial to help teachers find powerful pieces of texts for lessons that help kids and to help create a community that represents all students, she says.

Opportunities for Cultural Proficiency

Breanna uses her personal cultural background to influence her instructional decisions when selecting a mentor text to read to her students or how she chooses to explain historical concepts. At the beginning of the year, the first text Breanna read to her class was about a boy who lived in California in a barrio, and her students enjoyed the book. She tries to represent every student in the class with the literature she picks, hoping it will encourage them to want to read more. She believes when students see themselves in the content, they become more invested in their learning.

Beyond selecting relevant mentor texts, she tried make her lessons culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) for her students because the standard curriculum may not be exciting to them. She asks, how she can have her students make connections to the content? For example, she relates calculating percentages in 5th grade to her students that want to grow up to be professional athletes. Breanna explains to her students that if they do not know how to multiply or simply understand basic math, they could potentially get duped out of a lot of money in a poorly written contract. Finding ways to prompt students' understanding of the importance of school, in the long run, is part of her continual work as a teacher.

Moreover, Breanna's grade level had a one-to-one laptop program for the students, allowing students to translate text into their native language at their reading stations. This translation tool was particularly helpful to her student from Syria to understand the passage assigned to the class. Even in writing, Breanna tries to connect assignments back to students'

cultures. At the beginning of this year, Breanna struggled to teach writing because of the curriculum program used by Bramble Elementary. Nevertheless, Breanna kept getting her students to make their writing relatable to them. When she was in Texas, there was a popular grocery store chain called H.E.B. She adapted the acronym for her writing and had her students think about a (H) hero, an (E) enjoyable time in their life, or a (B) book. For example, in class, when her students were writing about World War II and the decision for the atomic bomb, she would tell them there needs to be a moment where they bring their writing back to their personal experiences. Some kids were able to remember a time where they felt scared, or a time where they did not understand what was going on. For example, "They kind of used their experiences in their essays to bring it home for themselves a little bit so they could find some sort of connection into the stuff that we were talking about." By having her students draw on their own experiences writing about World War II became more relatable and her familiar acronym reminded them of options.

Breanna admits that it is difficult to find a balance of ensuring strong content while incorporating race and culture into her classroom. "As a teacher, that's always been a fault of mine, trying to focus on two things at once. One is always going to trump the other, and it's usually going to be content and data, and then culture just kind of lags a little bit," states Breanna. Teachers need to find a way to create not just a culturally responsive classroom but also a social culture within the school. Unfortunately, multiple tasks and demands can feel like having one dragon breathing fire down their back. She believes teachers often cannot incorporate race and culture because they are concerned with school driven priorities such as pulling small groups for remediation and producing "good data."

As such, there are months schools can celebrate to help students learn about different cultures. For example, Breanna remembered celebrating Multicultural Day when she was younger, where she was able to experience cultures from around the world. Breanna asserts that schools should put more into mentorships and not just focus on the content but the teacher's well-being and creating moments that are culturally responsive for students to experience. By providing teachers with the professional development they need to strength their culturally responsive practices, students also reap the benefits. She believes that investing in strong mentorship will help the climate and energy of the teachers, which would help with the environment of the school.

Breanna states:

> You always hear that cliché statement like it takes a village. Well, there's a lot of people in the village missing in these schools, and if you want the whole child to be successful, then you need to make sure the whole teacher is successful, and then it trickles up to, well who are those people in the building to help with that. There has to be a shift or change to make that happen, because no matter what, we need teachers and teachers need people, but we don't have those people in the building yet. Well, some people we have, but a lot of people we don't.

Teacher mentorship must become more than sharing information about lesson plans and data, but rather mentoring needs to begin to incorporate the well-being of teachers and professional development on how to incorporate culturally responsive practices in their classrooms. A mentor needs to be that support system to combat the demands of this profession, but also someone that is willing to have hard conversations regarding race. Mentors cannot assist teachers in having

conversations on race or provide help for mental health when mentors themselves do not have the tools to deliver those services.

Unfortunately, Breanna did not feel part of the school faculty this year because the only group she participated in was the mentoring program that met once a month after school. Breanna would have liked to have volunteered for the literacy committee. She did not join any committee so that she could learn how to teach the curriculum the way the district-mandated without the distraction of committee work. Next year, she plans to volunteer for perhaps the math, technology, or culture and climate committee to expand her professional skills and knowledge. Breanna also did not feel included because the only connection she had outside of the classroom was the one on one time in the mentoring committee. On the days where the school committees met, Breanna and another new grade level teacher needed to further co-plan the lessons in their rooms, which meant they never really got a chance to be a part of anything. The way the committee schedule was set up by administration, any new teacher was placed in the mentor program and that served as their committee. New teachers were told by the administration to refrain from joining other committees even if those teachers wanted to, to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

When a teacher is new to a school or a district, and nobody knows who they are or their knowledge as a teacher, finding their teacher voice can be difficult. Breanna did not have the opportunity to show what she knew or collaborate with others. "The knowledge that I had was just kind of put on the back burner, it was like, no, you just need to learn the way of this district and I was like, okay, so that's what I did," said Breanna. For a while, Breanna felt out of place. She tried to understand how to contribute to her school besides merely teaching content. Once she understood the new curriculum and district assessments, everything became a little easier.

Then, Breanna tried to figure out what else she could contribute or learn, but found it was

difficult to get those opportunities.

MENTEE 2: LANE

"As a first-year teacher, I witnessed colleagues belittling students, and knew it could potentially have negative consequences moving forward for those students. Many teachers do not realize their daily actions influence others, especially those new to teaching."   -Lane

Teaching & Mentorship Experience

Lane is a white female who just finished her first-year teaching. When Lane was in high school, she saw a lot of separation between neurotypical students and students with special needs, and a lot of times, those students became misunderstood or bullied. Lane chose to become a teacher to support socio emotional learning in young people. She wanted to provide the students she worked with a safe environment and an environment where academics was not only at the forefront but also social and emotional education. She also wanted to give students a space where they could learn and interact with others to prepare them to live in a society where everyone is different from one another. Lane teaches in the county in which she attended as a student, but in a different school from where she completed her student teaching.

Currently, she is working in a Title One school. However, the school where she completed her student teaching was a much different experience. It was in a wealthier area where the resources were seemingly unlimited. Coming to work at a Title One school after her student teaching experience was an adjustment for Lane. In some ways, her student teaching developed her skills as a teacher by writing or creating lessons. However, in other ways, she felt very unqualified. "I felt underprepared to teach students with extreme behaviors and students in poverty. I wish I had gotten more education as far as teaching students with disabilities in regard to differentiation and behavior," said Lane. Whereas during student teaching, she may have

experienced one outburst a month, but in her class this year, she saw outbursts once a week or more across multiple students because several students had clashing personalities. Some of her students would lash out at one another calling each other names or attempting to pick fights. She explained, "The beginning was a tough adjustment because the tactics 'they' teach you in school for classroom management tend to lean more towards normal student behavior and what happens when your average student acts out."

Additionally, I remember a day when Lane was absent and one of her students jumped another student from behind and pinned that student to the ground. The boy immediately started punching the student on the ground. Another teacher and I ran over to the students and pulled them apart to break up the fight. Fights in Lane's class were not uncommon nor were the extreme behaviors. As the other teacher and I reported the fight to one of the Assistant Principals, we were questioned by the assistant principal "if it was actually a fight that we saw or boys playing." I remember being so taken back by the question because the Assistant Principal was not outside and did not witness the two boys punching each other. I knew right then and there that Lane did not have the support from that administrator when handling the extreme behaviors in her class.

Lane could have benefitted from having a pre-conference with administration or her students' previous teachers regarding those students who were violent or extremely disruptive. Although she was assigned a mentor, her mentor did not know how to best help Lane with the severe behaviors in her class. Had she known the extent of some of the behaviors within her class, she would have put different rules and procedures in place. For example, in her student-teaching experience, she allowed for more flexible seating and student choice, those strategies did not work well with this class with such extreme behaviors.

She recalls her most memorable mentoring experience when she taught in a fifth-grade inclusion classroom while working with many students with severe disabilities which student teaching. The fifth-grade teacher encouraged the students with severe disabilities to have an open dialogue together and to encourage them to interact with each other. Not only were the students with disabilities getting high levels of interactions, which improved their ability to learn in a safe environment, but they also did well in school overall. It showed Lane that learning differences should not be ignored in classrooms, but rather embraced.

Furthermore, Lane worked with two primary mentors this year, the mentor she was assigned to and an instructional coach. Her mentor was very supportive and understood how Lane liked to conduct lessons and address student behavior in her room. This mentor did not push Lane to do something that she disagreed with. Anything that her mentor advised, she found it to be easily adaptable to her teaching style. Lane's other mentor was an instructional coach who was helpful academically and could assist individual students with their behaviors. "Certain students were willing to work with him and respect him as a Black man. As a white female, I had a different relationship with them," stated Lane. In some ways, though, Lane felt he tried to push her to adopt his teaching methods which made Lane uncomfortable. She thought he was more disciplined, whereas Lane was more conversational about responding to student infractions. However, she acknowledges the need for balance in the classroom because teachers cannot talk through everything. There is a level of respect that a teacher has to have, but at the same time, Lane believes, "I respect you, you respect me type situation." There is never a situation where it is right to put a student down or belittle them to make them feel inferior primarily because of their grades which she noticed her instructional coach often does.

Unfortunately, Lane has seen belittling students first-hand from other teachers in the school. She does not believe those teachers do not care about their students. However, she has overheard or observed individual teachers constantly verbalize to students that they are failing or that they are not trying. Lane believes those types of negative conversations belittle students. Thomas-Alexander and Harper (2017) suggest that many mentors working in urban schools tend to make over-generalizations and deficit comments about urban schools and the students they taught. With a lack of positive views articulated by mentors, mentee begin to adopt the same deficit views. Many of the children at Lane's school already do not think they are smart and speaking to them that way is inappropriate. She asserts the best way to make a kid succeed is to make them feel smart and successful rather than putting them down.

Furthermore, teachers who speak negatively with their students do so because of stress placed upon them to achieve high test scores, she says. She truly believes that all the teachers in her school care about their students. Lane believes that eventually, the stress of being a teacher, the pressure from the school, the county, and the state is so high that it breaks teachers down into believing that speaking to their students negatively is the only way to get kids to succeed. To change this type of negative behavior, the focus needs to shift away from standardized testing and more toward meeting kids where they are. When teachers do not get children up to a certain level, and they feel their job is on the line, then there is no other choice but to speak to them that way. Unfortunately, speaking poorly to students boils down to many teachers feeling the pressure. Like Lane, I have walked through the halls and heard teachers yelling at their class or individual students about scores. Teachers do not go into the profession setting out to belittle children; however, at some point, the pressures placed upon them to achieve high test scores can make some teachers snap, causing teachers to believe speaking to children negatively is normal.

Lane's professional goals are changing all the time, but she would like to eventually earn a master's degree, although she is not sure in which specific content area. As this is her first year and interrupted by the pandemic, Lane does not feel she has a grasp on where she sees herself in this teaching career. She would like to teach a little longer at her current school and then possibly teach at a different school or county before deciding if classroom teaching is truly for her. She may also want to be in a different setting within a school. Lane has considered counseling or psychology because she has found this year she has served as more of a mediator and a counselor than a teacher. There are a lot of issues that students face daily that is not or cannot be handled by a counselor and she wants to change that. Lane has enjoyed sitting down and talking with her students about their lives and answering their questions about life. She feels when a student comes to a teacher with a traumatic situation, the teacher sends the child to a counselor, but the misconception is that the situation ends there. In reality, a child's trauma does not end with a counseling session. They are still coming back to the classroom with all that baggage and still trying to figure out how to deal with the trauma on a day to day basis. For example, Lane noticed a student talking with their peers about how a topic in social studies reminds them of someone who has been arrested or someone who has been abused. She must navigate how to appropriately address the student's issues all while getting her class back on track with their learning.

During the pandemic in the spring of 2020, Lane had significantly more contact with her student's parents through digital learning than she did before. Earlier in the school year, some parents were more accessible than others. However, since digital learning began, Lane struggled to remain in contact with many parents. At the same time, fortunately, certain parents that were not as easy to contact throughout the year have begun reaching out to Lane now that their child is doing digital learning. Before digital learning, Lane could not use technology much because of

the lack of resources available on campus. The lack of technology caused her students to do minimal typing or assignments on computers. There was never enough equipment for students, the computer carts and labs were always checked out. Booking the computer lab was also problematic, one time, one time, Lane booked the lab, but when she arrived with her class, the lab was double-booked due to testing. I was in the computer lab next door and combined our classes together so her students would not miss out on completing the assignment.

Lane's relationship with some students has improved because of digital learning. Particular students that may have had difficulties with behaviors in her classroom being separated from situations or peer interactions that impeded learning have benefitted particular students. Lane found that some of her students seem to be excited to learn and eager to log on because they are void of classroom distractions. Lane has had very little participation from other students, those who struggled with understanding content. Even with her students who tested high, she began noticing their participation teetered off. However, Lane's students who tested average were the ones that worked the hardest and put in the most effort. She is unsure of the source of their motivation. However, those students seemed to be the group that worked the most throughout digital learning.

For now, Lane wants to find a school setting she belongs in because she feels she has not had enough experience as an educator to know enough about herself as a teacher in regard to what she wants for her education. Still, she would like to help students in a social-emotional way or continue working with students with special needs.

Mentorship Dilemmas: Coaching vs. Mentoring and Lack of Autonomy

As a first-year teacher, Lane experienced many dilemmas. Her mentor tried to help alleviate the challenges as much as she could, but unfortunately, her mentor had difficulty assisting her with the many issues Lane encountered. One of Lane's biggest dilemmas was how her class was structured in terms of enrollment, which was decided by the administration. She felt the decision of the enrollment of her class was made because her students did need a lot of extra support, but it did not come out the way they intended. Lane thought she could not be trusted to create materials and implement lessons on her own or teach with fidelity because of her student's test scores. Some days, she had instructional coaches in her room to strictly watch her rather than providing guidance and support.

As a teacher, having instructional coaches come into your room without providing support can be hard to swallow. In our school, instructional coaches are placed in teachers' classrooms by administration during the second and third quarter when a teacher's class is not performing to a certain level on the district benchmarks. Only a few years ago, I was given an instructional coach to come sit in my room to watch me teach reading because my scores were not to the level of satisfaction of administration. In reality, the problem was not my implementation of reading but rather that our school had adopted the Lucy Calkins Reading Curriculum that year and it was not working for my students. Like Lane, I too have been told my test scores were not where they should be and therefore an instructional coach was placed in my room to watch me teach and provide feedback rather than modeling lessons and providing solutions to a problem.

In addition, at the beginning of this school year, a few lessons were modeled by her mentor, especially in math and social studies, to understand how to teach specific concepts. Lane especially found social studies to be difficult because of time constraints but having a couple of lessons modeled for her helped her figure out timing of lessons. Her mentor gave her feedback on how to use her time more wisely and made suggestions for reorganizing her room so that she could provide some students with more flexibility. Lane's mentor also tried to help her with timing out her lessons and her classroom day because she felt that her biggest struggle as a teacher was time management. Frequently, Lane prepared too much to teach within a lesson, or too little, and the students ended up with free time. She had flexibility in student teaching. If the teachers fit all content during the day, the administration was not concerned about the teacher's timing. However, her current school is restrictive, and she has no flexibility to tweak her lesson plans to differentiate.

Nonetheless, once September came, the observations with her mentor became more sporadic, and the instructional coach focus shifted toward curbing the student behaviors that were disruptive and unproductive in Lane's room. For example, these behaviors emerged as it took Lane several months to find a balance in teaching writing with her collaborating teacher. Many of her students needed additional support with the basics of writing, like forming sentences. This additional student behavior made it difficult for Lane to stick to the timeframe provided. As a first-year teacher, with little support, managing her classroom became hard, thus she found herself going to other teachers on the grade level with similar struggles to ask for help.

In many ways, Lane felt confiding in those teachers was helpful even if it just felt like she was not alone. Two of the three teachers were also first-year teachers, so Lane thought that they all had similar struggles, which made them come together to try to figure out how they could

teach their specific group of students. Although she received help from an instructional coach and her mentor, the relationships she built with the other new teachers helped her emotionally through the year. I see my experience as a new teacher in much of Lane's experience. I relied heavily on the other two new teachers on my grade level that year to confide in because our struggles were similar as new teachers. Like Lane, my mentorship was lackluster as a new teacher and I found comfort in knowing other new teachers had similar experiences as me.

Lane hopes that teachers can be given more autonomy in their classrooms. However, she does not see that happening within her county. As a former student, in Grand County, she saw the way her former teachers struggled with the same issue. She believes most students can see that most teachers are not happy with the lack of autonomy and excessive testing. Lane is hopeful that one day within the county, teachers are respected more. For example, in her classroom, Lane was not allowed to differentiate within her small groups because her small groups were completely planned out for her and three other teachers on the grade level by the instructional coaches. At the same time, the other teachers on the grade level did not have to participate in the planned small group. Lane was given the passages to read, told how long to spend with each group, and told what to say. She could take a little more time with one group and a bit less time with another.

However, the instructional coach advised her not to let students ask too many questions or not to stop and explain too much of the lesson to students because she would run out of time. Teaching her small groups that way might have been ok with her students who tested high, but that structure did not work with her students who tested low. There were days that Lane could not even read the passage but instead had to assign them individual readings because, based on the guidelines the instructional coaches had given her, she was not allowed to read specific

passages out loud due to time constraints. Lane could not provide her students with feedback, so she was unable to help students that were struggling because she had to move onto the next group. Lane is hopeful that next year will be different, although in the fall what school will look like is unknown due to the current pandemic. Although her students were unable to take the quarter three district assessments due to the pandemic, she truly believes that having that level of strictness in timing still would not have helped them increase their scores.

In some ways, Lane's schedule is more restrictive because she has so many other teachers pushing in to help students with either ESOL or Special Education support. However, the directives on scheduling makes Lane feel that the county is focusing on oneness. She believes administration is focusing on equality rather than equity. For example, a classroom with majority gifted students, should not be taught in the same way as a classroom with a lot of Special Education students. Lane asserts that her students with special education needs should have more support and time to spend on specific content and less time on other standards. For example, writing is a challenge for many of her students with special needs. She wants the autonomy to teach her students at their ability level to help close any gap they may have. However, she was expected by the administration to teach the same lesson material to her students with Special Education and English Language Learners that a teacher teaches to students who are gifted. Lane describes teaching lessons are standardized across the grade level and they are just not equitable, she is unable to differentiate the lessons for her students.

Furthermore, Lane felt she did not have much professional collaboration this year. She worked with an instructional coach and two other teachers on her grade level to plan instructional materials for reading and math, analyze data, and use that data to create new content for further lessons. The instructional coach began acting as a mentor to the first-year teachers.

Lane cannot recall a time in which she truly collaborated with the instructional coach but rather the instructional coach created and planned the lessons. The coach helped filling out papers or writing up data on students, she would get help. Lane did not consider that collaboration; she was in a situation where all the teachers in her hall were either new to the school or first-year teachers, causing all those teachers to be assigned an instructional coach based on their students' benchmark scores.

Another struggle that Lane faced was getting support for her students with special needs. Initially, when she asked for help from administration to address the ongoing student behavior in her class, she was told to handle the situations that would arise on her own unless students became violent in her classroom. There were many opportunities where Lane could have used support and did not think that she could ask for it. Administration told her to submit discipline paperwork after an issue or alteration had occurred instead of supporting preventive strategies. As student behaviors kept progressing, Although the form technically did not say she could ask for advice on the behavior response chart, a co-worker finally advised her to ask administration or counselors for help for specific situations. At the beginning of the year, the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) chart outlined what situations the teacher, counselor, and administration handles. Although they tried to make the chart clear, some of the lines were blurred, which led to some confusion by Lane and others with regards to obtaining support. Since the administration was aware of certain behaviors in her class from previous years' experience with students, they should have been clearer on what type of situations they would support teachers.

There were many times that student outbursts in Lane's class warranted support. However, she received a slow administrative response or sometimes no response at all. For

example, no one came to her assistance when a student threw books, hit another student, or even got in Lane's face and threatened her. I witnessed Lane requesting assistance from administration or a counselor over the walkie-talkie and she was asked "is your situation was an emergency or can it wait." I remember thinking if a teacher is requesting for administration or a counselor then the circumstances are pressing.

Another issue Lane faced this year was the splitting of her class for specials. Unfortunately, because of the student behavior issues, her students were sent with the other fourth grade teachers. Lane did not know how to deliver her students to each teacher and tried at least six different methods of getting her students safely to specials throughout the school year. She dropped them off or left them on the playground with the assigned. She then found those students wandering the building sneaking into the bathrooms or getting into fights. Lane recalled a time when one student left the assigned teacher and ran into the parking lot. The fact that she had to keep changing the way she sent students to those teachers provided them the perfect opportunity to do whatever they wanted. She would have appreciated help in figuring out the best way for the students to get to specials because it would have saved her a lot of time and a lot of discipline issues.

Moreover, for new teachers, setting up behavior expectations and class procedures from day one is essential, yet much of the time, many assume new teachers know how to manage their classrooms not recalling they were required to follow a cooperating teacher's rules and procedures during student teaching. Having a mentor model beginning of the year expectations potentially alleviate so many issues with student behavior down the road. Lane recalls, even on the first day of school, some students throwing things like pencils or paper. She had no clue how to start the first day of school because she had never seen the first day of school as a teacher.

Lane was given a PowerPoint as a guideline to teach her students procedure but had no idea of how to lay out those expectations and routines. She felt left in the dark about a lot of the school's procedures, which made it difficult for Lane to get those across clearly to her students. She also felt in the dark about how to address behavior in a way that met the school's expectations. The first few weeks were challenging to teach anything because she did not want to give negative consequences. With better mentorship she might have used more logical consequences for her students in the beginning of the school year establishing a classroom environment more conducive to learning.

One of the most significant issues in her class, aside from behaviors and test scores, was most of her class received Special Ed. services, ESOL services, or both. So even with all the extra support, scoring low on quarterly benchmark tests from Lane and the instructional coaches, the students were still considered behind grade level. The instructional coach assigned to Lane yelled at the students and took away activities because they refused to work or engaged in horseplay. Lane disagreed with this solution because many students are looking for a reaction and attention from the teacher and yelling served that purpose. Lane felt overpowered by the instructional coach in the classroom. Lane's response to infractions did not matter because of the direct contrast between her and the instructional coach's approach. How the coach handled student behaviors undermined her because the students knew that was not something she would have done. Her students would look at her to stick up for them, and Lane felt that she could not because the instructional coach was an authority figure out of respect for the instructional coach. Lane did not raise the issue and appreciated most of the help they gave her.

Anytime the instructional coach noticed a student not paying attention or talking, he immediately belittled and attacked the students instead of starting with redirection. "They would

yell at the student and tell them; you know this is why you're failing. It's because you don't pay attention, you don't care. It was in a raised voice to where it wasn't helping the situation it was just making them feel bad about themselves, and I think it always just kind of naturally went towards that," stated Lane. Lane might have handled those situations by talking to a student about how paying attention affects their grades and their grades affect their goals in life. Instead, the instructional coach instantly berated the student in front of their peers, talked about their test scores and how they were failing. Sometimes the instructional coach showed the entire class' scores, and students looked at each other's scores to see who was failing and who was not. Lane felt the way the instructional coach spoke to the students created a negative environment in her classroom. Lane felt as though she did not have a role when the coach was speaking, instead she was just as shocked as her students. Lane was recently a student herself, she was put in the shoes of the students and reminded when she was yelled at by teachers growing up. The whole scene was scary for Lane as a first-year teacher; she never really knew how to approach her colleague to have a conversation with them about this problem. So instead, she spoke with the other first-year teachers on her grade level because they all felt on the same page. Anderson, (2007) suggests supervisor teachers can have a lack of awareness of their power over their preservice teachers during their mentorship experience.

Unfortunately, she never addressed the issue with the instructional coach, but instead, she tried to get around the awkwardness by making suggestions like creating goals for her students, having academic conversations, and morning meetings. On a personal level, Lane liked the instructional coach, and despite all the negative things she saw from him, she did get a lot of help and good advice for how to structure her classroom. For example, Lane began using a doorbell for smoother transitions and placing spots on the carpet so that her students knew where to sit.

Sometimes Lane felt that because her students received so much negative feedback from both the instructional coach and special teachers, it was her responsibility to provide a positive atmosphere. She felt that creating a positive atmosphere was important for her African American and Latinx students. As a first-year teacher, Lane witnessed colleagues belittling students, and she knew it could potentially have negative consequences moving forward for those students. Many teachers do not realize their daily actions influence others, especially those new to teaching. New teachers witness teachers treating students poorly and believe that is the norm for school and students. All teachers need to realize their actions influence other students, faculty, and staff both positively and negatively.

Mentorship Improvements

Furthermore, a suggestion to improve the mentorship program would be to have teachers participate from different backgrounds that can provide diverse perspectives. For example, Lane's view of civil rights may be different than that of a teacher of color. Lane also suggests addressing misconceptions about issues that may arise when teaching specific standards and advice for how teachers can address those standards with their students. For example, fourth grade students learn about the civil war and enslavement. Much of the content taught has become whitewashed and diluted and this could be avoided by providing teachers with resources to open age-appropriate dialogue about the events from our history can address some of the misconceptions. She also suggests the mentorship program provide new teachers with a strong sense of classroom management. Although Lane had an idea of how she was going to manage her class, she quickly realized her classroom management plan was not enough for her setting.

The program should show teachers, both new and experienced, that they are utilizing the curriculum the best way possible and not just recycling lessons and stories from the past years. Lane also suggests reviewing procedures like lunchroom rules. For example, she did not realize teachers were supposed to assign a sweeper and a wiper for their table. She also did not know the students were supposed to line up by the window. Luckily, her students knew how to get their food, sit down, and line up. However, she did not assign a table wiper and a sweeper, so the students just got up and left the table dirty, causing one of the assistant principals to call Lane out in front of the teachers and students in the cafeteria via the speakerphone. Lane was embarrassed and shocked because she did not know the cafeteria procedures. She thought the cafeteria procedures could have been a private conversation with the assistant principal.

Opportunities for Cultural Proficiency

Beyond struggles with basic procedures in the school cafeteria, there was a stark contrast between what cultural norms Lane saw in her extended family and what she saw in her school as she grew up. It was hard to navigate because a lot of her extended family displayed racial prejudices (DiAngelo, 2018). However, she believed she grew up in a world where racism was rejected. According to Lane, there were no racial issues in her K-12 schools. The first thing Lane addressed in her first year of teaching was to learn how to deal with racial problems in her classroom when the issues arose. She knew racism existed. Despite her original beliefs about her family, she saw racism in her own family. She knew racism was wrong but thought racial problems were limited to certain areas. She thought racism was dead; however, while working in a rural white school when she was in college, she noticed that racism could persist even within the school system. She realized those students were not learning how to interact with people who looked or thought differently than they did.

However, when she went to a majority white college, it was unfortunate and shocking for her to see that racism was not limited to older generations. Racism is still enacted by people her age; she was astonished to see this in her own generation and thus she was determined to teach students about diversity. She recognizes that part of her privilege is growing up having not experienced race as an issue. However, based on her college experiences she acknowledges now race is still an issue and understanding racism is one of her professional and personal goals.

Lane teaches primarily African American and Latinx students. As a white female, she feels some of her students came into her classroom with some mistrust for her as their teacher because of our racialized society. Some of her students enjoy asking personal questions, which can be difficult for Lane to answer, but she tries her best to respond to build trust. For example, one of Lane's student's fathers was arrested, and the student was very open about his mistrust for white people and police officers in class. In the beginning of school, Lane felt the student did not trust her, nevertheless the student told her their story, which she appreciated. She was then able to open an age-appropriate dialogue with the student about why he had not trusted other teachers in the past and why he may not trust Lane. As the year went on, those conversations with him became helpful to building their student teacher relationship. Lane further understood how she could grow in speaking with other students in a way that they could establish a more open relationship which ultimately allowed her to better teach them. These conversations with her students also allowed Lane to learn how some of the students wanted to learn academic information.

One of Lane's biggest struggles, but also her most favorite aspect of being a teacher, was working with students from different racial and cultural backgrounds than her own. She believes, "that no matter how old you get, the most you will ever learn is from people who are different

from you." Lane feels she has learned more about society and culture and her self-perceptions this year because of working with racially and culturally different students. As a white teacher in a classroom with no white students, Lane must approach things in a much different way than a teacher of color might. With students coming into her class with an inherent distrust or wariness of her and whiteness, Lane had to show them she cared and understood issues like immigration, color, parents who are incarcerated, or if they came from a particular neighborhood. Lane had to find appropriate ways to navigate those conversations that were age-appropriate and showed her students that she cared.

Lane enjoyed watching her students' trust for her grow and their outlook or negative perspectives toward people change. Just because Lane's students' view of white or other races changed over time did not mean that those students did not hold other stereotypes. Whether those stereotypes were because of gender, race, or even because of sexuality, she found having age-appropriate dialogue with her students was challenging, but she was determined to address the issues that arose within her class. Lane's students had conversations surrounding issues of sexuality and she did not know how to navigate that conversation; her students used a lot of inappropriate terminology in discussing sexuality and gender. She found having racial and cultural communications with nine-year-olds was difficult and figuring out how to tell her students that certain words are inappropriate and why those words are inappropriate was challenging.

However, once she had those age-appropriate conversations with her students, she began watching many of her students having conversations regarding race or culture with their peers. Whenever she needed to have racial or cultural conservation with her students, she did not necessarily feel something that needed to be addressed by the counselor. Many times, if a child

said something racially or culturally inappropriate, the child had heard the word or phrase on the internet or from their parents. Lane had to learn how to facilitate these conversations when they arose.

Moreover, Lane tries to make instructional decisions in reading and social studies with an underlying theme of inclusion or struggle; or allow student conversation in social studies about current issues. She feels fourth grade's social studies content is exceptionally easy to help students make connections between the past and the present. Thus, she includes students based on their religion, gender, and background to leverage the curriculum. She believes her students love to see themselves in what they are learning whenever possible. Lane believes, "if kids get excited just hearing their name in a book or a movie, imagine how great it must be to see somebody that looks like them or has their same religion or celebrates the same things that they do." She believes most students do not enjoy history because most of the history the students learn up until high school is mainly US history, which as currently written in the curriculum, is limited to white accomplishments or enslavement. Lane observes that history is whitewashed and unrelatable to students, especially hers. This makes learning history difficult for students as they do not see the relevance or purpose learning (Love, 2019).

Lane tries to ensure each student feels accepted and appreciated for who they are, and she recognizes their differences. This attitude contributes to her overall learning environment. Further, when there is a positive learning environment throughout the school, students, teachers, and administrators are happier. Teachers feel confident when their students go to another teacher. For example, "As a teacher, I shouldn't have to worry if I send my student to another room, or if my student goes to another room for a specific learning segment, whether they are going to be treated the same way I would treat them." Lane was uncomfortable with the inconsistency in

how teachers teach and interact with students. This atmosphere creates discord among teachers. The disparity in positive learning environments makes learning for students that much more challenging.

In the end, Lane believes having clear expectations across the school would prevent many discrepancies in student experiences. Sometimes Lane feels the administration is not always on the same page as their teachers or cohesive in their approach. There are times assistant principals are finding out information from teachers that they were unaware of, such as, Lane received permission from her assistant principal to allow individual students to use computers as a reward for doing well in their Special Education class. However, a different assistant principal scored Lane low on classroom management because they asserted that those students should not have been on the computers. Having administration on the same page, especially in evaluating teachers, prevents confusion, mixed messaging, and inadvertent, negative consequences for teachers.

Lane believes schools should be more open to addressing current controversial issues and events. She was disheartened when February rolled around, and there were no lessons or morning videos acknowledging Black History Month. There was an assembly, but because the assembly was in the evening, attendance was difficult for some teachers and students. Lane suggested holding the assembly during the school day, too, so the students could be a part of the celebration. Children need to see support from the white community for their culture. When students of color experience support from their white teachers, it provides opportunities to let the students know their teachers care about them, especially with racial issues amplified in the community. Lane does not understand why schools cannot issue a statement letting the families know that when racial issues happen on campus, their children are cared for and their safety is

essential. Instead, many schools chose to ignore discussing topics of race, leaving many students and teachers of color feeling not seen. Her school needs to begin addressing issues of race and culture with their students and staff instead of ignoring them and pretending they do not exist.

MENTEE 3: RAKEL

"So then I don't always want to ask if I don't know, because I am supposed to be the one everyone thinks, you're so great. You're so great. You're so great. Then it's like, but I'm not in this area, I don't know." -Rakel

Teaching & Mentorship Experience

Rakel is an African American female who has taught for 15 years. She has taught grades K, 1, 2,3,5, and in Abu Dhabi, Indiana, and Georgia. Rakel prefers teaching in primary grades because she enjoys the younger students. Rakel has wanted to be a teacher, ever since she was a little girl. She remembers being in school and thinking she wanted to be a teacher, like her mother. As she got older, she reconfirmed her decision to enter teaching because she gravitated toward helping the little kids at church. She loved them, and they loved her. Rakel was certain she wanted to work with kids. However, because of generally low teacher salaries, she also considered becoming a child psychologist. Psychologists typically make more money, and she had a strong model in her father. Rakel chose teaching because she felt she would see the children she worked with more frequently and become a constant in their life. She was concerned that if she became a child psychologist, she might only see her young people once or twice a week. Rakel believed she would have more impact on young people's lives if she saw the children daily.

Rakel recalls her first year teaching as her most memorable experience in mentorship. Rakel asserts, "When you're a first-year teacher, and everyone knows you're a first-year teacher, I think that's when people offer the most help and guidance. They came to my room and saw how I did things. It's like the higher up you get in years, and you switch schools, people just assume that you know everything because you've taught for seven years, 10 years or 15 years." The

longer teachers teach and switch schools, mentorship becomes more about help with grades or finding the copiers. Whereas, as a first or second-year teacher, mentorship focuses on modeling teaching lessons and classroom management. Professional support for new teachers typically focuses on facilitating the first year of teaching, not for sustaining professional learning, leading to becoming a more effective teacher (Hobson et al., 2009). Many mentor programs are only geared toward the teacher new to the educational field, and usually only within their first year of teaching. Once educators complete their first year of teaching, they are no longer considered a beginning teacher and exited from mentor and induction programs (Gallant & Riley, 2014). Having a mentor helped Rakel understand how the school leadership wanted teachers to conduct guided reading was beneficial. Mentoring in her earlier years was the best because the focus was improving her craft as a teacher. This year, Rakel felt both her mentor and grade level always made her feel included. "I never felt like, I guess disengaged with the school or I never felt like an outsider just, you know, I just felt right at home. That was probably partly the grade level and administration. There were a lot of different things. So I never really felt like not a part of the faculty," she said. Having an overall environment that provides support is crucial as a teacher because it makes teachers feel included in their new schools.

Rakel asserts if a teacher is new to a school, then it is beneficial to have a mentor because every school implements lessons, manages student behavior, communicates with parents differently. Moreover, changing schools is not just about paperwork and knowing how to do grades. For Rakel, shared reading is something she had not mastered. She describes shared reading as choral reading with the students and something that was never explained to her, so she used what she thought was common sense and we all "shared" in reading. She asked the students who could read along with her to read with her, and the other students catch on as the week

progressed. By the end of the week, the hope is that everyone can read the book. She developed a better idea of expectations for shared reading when she attended a "reading boot camp" style of professional development, but it was unfortunately cut short due to inclement weather. Instead, she watched an instructor model and taught a lesson on shared reading, which helped her gain a better understanding of how to implement shared reading best. Rakel thought since she had been teaching for so many years, she should already know how to teach in a shared reading model. Like Breana, she was nervous about revealing a professional weakness. Nevertheless, she was eager to learn. It does not matter how many years a person has been teaching; Rakel believes teachers benefit from mentorship at any experience level.

Many administrators likely assume experienced teachers do not need mentorship and devote more resources toward novice teachers. This narrow thinking robs teachers of advanced experience levels of support and growth. Most schools have a mentor-mentee program, but mentor programs do not always tackle the specific needs of teachers in their local school program. For example, Rakel's need for improving her knowledge of shared reading. Rakel has seen plenty of people execute guided reading and feels comfortable carrying out guided reading. However, something smaller like a mini-lesson or shared reading has not always been in her focus when teaching reading, which means teachers need additional support learning new strategies.

At the beginning of Rakel's teaching career, she frequently observed her mentor and other teachers mainly with guided reading practice. Although she went to college and graduated, Rakel still was terrified to teach kids how to read. When she was initially hired as a first-grade teacher and realized many of her students could not read, she believed her students' inability to read was her fault because she did not know how to teach them best. By observing her mentor who also

walked Rakel through the process, Rakel learned to teach guided reading. Over the years, she has taken ideas from other teachers when she watches them teach and implements those ideas in her classroom to improve lessons or classroom management. Unfortunately, she observed teachers more when she was a new teacher and as she gains experiences, observes less and more frequently has of other teachers watch her teach. However, recently she did have the opportunity to observe a few teachers as a requirement for her gifted program certification. "There are teachers that, you hear, oh, they're just doing so great. They're doing these things in their room, or you hear about their scores being awesome. I'm curious, what are they doing? I want to see it," stated Rakel. Other teachers have come to observe Rakel, specifically how she teaches reading, but do not offer any feedback. Peer observations are designed by administration so teachers can observe lessons and implement the strategies they see in those classrooms rather than providing feedback, this is a significant missed learning opportunity for all.

Furthermore, grasping a sense of how to enrich students came only after Rakel took her gifted endorsement course. Rakel states, "I think schools just assume that over the years, you collect information from here or there and you do, but you don't get it all still." Rakel considers herself to be a strong reading teacher; however, sometimes that can lead to others assuming she is strong in all content areas. Rakel knows she can always improve and extend her learning. For example, "I don't always want to ask if I don't know, because I am supposed to be the one everyone thinks, you're so great. You're so great. You're so great. Then it's like, but I'm not in this area, I don't know." Like Rakel, I have felt the longer I teach, the more challenging asking for help becomes. In my first few years of teaching, I thought I could pass off not knowing everything because I was a new teacher. However, as each year passed, asking for help became more difficult because of the assumption from others that I should already know. Zembytska

(2016) claims the objective of teacher mentor programs is to help those teachers new to a school or district transition into their new roles. Given the constant shift of curriculum, pedagogical practices, school cultures within the educational profession, teachers are lifelong learners.

Moreover, Rakel believes she would benefit from having a mentor to assist her with her individual needs particularly with the Student Support Team (SST) process. Once a teacher has the basics of teaching at a particular school, a mentor could be provided for their own needs to grow as an educator. For example, Rakel describes herself as horrible at the SST process. She has somehow managed to avoid the SST process for years by getting students that are already in the process so she can simply continue where the previous teacher left off. Rakel recognizes that tackling the SST process is a weakness of hers and something she is not comfortable with because she does not understand what she is doing. Rakel would benefit from a mentor check in on her, show her the forms, and track the data she is assessing for students in the SST process. Providing a mentor based on individual needs would help teachers, especially as they increase in years of experience because this will help teachers grow in the areas they do not feel secure.

Furthermore, at her current school Rakel's mentor, who was also her partner-teacher, did a great job showing how much she communicated with their parents. Witnessing this high level of parent communication set the bar for Rakel for the level of expectation of how often she communicated with her students' parents. Rakel was not sure if the high level of parent communication was a school expectation but because her mentor communicated so often with parents, Rakel felt she needed to. She asserted her mentor demonstrated that a high level of parent communication might also be an expectation for parents in the dual-language program. She noticed those parents are more involved than parents with children not in the program. Rakel found her mentor to be more direct when speaking to parents whereas Rakel described herself as

soft and gentle. For example, "When it comes to talking to parents about their child. I like that she just says how it is. Your child doesn't know this, this, and this and you need to help them at home by doing ABC. So I like that about her. I just have not implemented that because that's not my nature, but I would like to do that." Rakel noticed how her co-teacher spoke with parents and wanted to incorporate that style of parent communication when talking to parents. Although softly spoken, Rakel wants to become more direct when communicating to her parents.

Rakel's mentor walked her through grades and parent-teacher conferences, which was helpful for a teacher new to the school. In the beginning, Rakel's mentor showed her how to send messages to parents or schedule parent conferences, but then because there was so much to do, Rakel's mentor would communicate with parents to help take something off her plate. "So everything I've been doing seems like it's for the first time so that she would take a lot off my plate, she would show me how to do it. But then she would go ahead and take the lead because we had the same students," stated Rakel. She reminded Rakel of meetings scheduled or dates for turning in paperwork. She was always reminding me of everything so that I wouldn't be the slacker of the grade level." Although Rakel was not a new teacher, adjusting to a new school in a new district takes time to learn new rules and expectations.

Furthermore, Rakel's mentor mainly helped her with contacting parents, and because they were partner teachers, it made it easier to collaborate on sending out information to parents through Dojo messages. Rakel and her mentor began sending out videos either weekly or bi-weekly to communicate with parents. In the beginning, since Rakel's mentor was more familiar with the school's expectation for parent communication, she would show Rakel what the expectation was and what type of information to send out to parents. Rakel then had the idea of sending out a video to the parents from both teachers. "We both kind of just would work together

on that and then for something that was like school-wide, it mainly would be I pretty much

would use her ideas because she kind of knew the expectations. Then I would just add anything

else if I had an idea." Once Rakel got her bearings on the expectations for communicating with

parents, Rakel began to offer her ideas, which made their relationship more collaborative and

balanced.

Rakel's mentor informed her of past school expectations, like having small groups

starting at 8:15. Although some of those school expectations had changed under a new principal,

Rakel noticed her mentor's students' high test scores, and it showed Rakel all the work it took to

get those results. Seeing her mentor's test results made Rakel realize she needed to take

advantage of every second of every day in the classroom. Rakel considered a ticket-in-the-door

but never really did implement it until she saw her mentor put ticket-in-the-door into practice.

Asking her mentor for ideas was difficult for Rakel because they taught different subjects. She

could adapt ideas she observed with her classroom and ultimately used the 8:15 meeting and

ticket strategy. Furthermore, by noticing how her mentor took advantage of every minute of the

day, Rakel decided she also wanted to take advantage of meeting with her kids more often

outside of the regular literacy workshop like upon their arrival or during bus-dismissal.

Rakel's professional goals are to remain in the classroom and keep teaching. She would

not enjoy administration but might enjoy becoming a teacher leader in the building eventually,

especially if she remains at this school for a long time. Rakel would also like to become an

expert in technology on her campus, although she would not want to become a Local School

Technology Coordinator (LSTC). Even before the pandemic, Rakel was interested in technology.

Last year she used Google Classroom for the first time and thought it was terrific. Shortly

thereafter, Rakel began to play around with online quizzes, making Boom Cards and found

different resources online. Now, whenever there is tech time at school, she tries to use it to learn about more technology-based resources for teaching.

Rakel's other educational goal is that she wants to be very knowledgeable. She admires knowledgeable teachers. For example, "When I was in my master's program, there was a professor who just had so much knowledge about everything. It was like research and pedagogy and strategies, and she could tell you who said what this person says is this person according to this, and I was like, wow, she knows a lot. I would love to be knowledgeable like that." Rakel also wants to be considered one of the best teachers. She states, "I want to be one of the best. I want everyone to think. When you think of me, you don't have to worry about me because she's good. I mean, that's kind of how it is now, but I just wanna be one of the best." Like Rakel, I admire knowledgeable teachers and continuously want to push myself to be more knowledgeable and one of the best in my field.

In the beginning of the pandemic of spring 2020, Rakel had a lot of student participation with the digital learning assignments, with only a few students missing because of the lack of access to a device. However, as the weeks wore on, Rakel's online student participation dwindled. She noticed some of her students skipping lessons and just going for the quiz. Rakel tried to make the lessons mirror a gradual release model using a video lesson as the teacher thinks-aloud, discussion board as the turn and talk, and then a quiz as the independent practice. However, she noticed only a few students watched the video yet almost all her students turned in the quiz. Rakel realized many of her students were just logging on to take the quiz but not watching the lesson. Further with everything going on, she did not want to bother parents, she knew that parents were doing the best they could. She was not one of those teachers that pushed

goals into the online lessons. The last new standard was introduced in February; therefore, the students were reviewing by that point in March when they were online.

Rakel felt during the pandemic in the spring of 2020, teaching itself never changed, but the feedback was different. She was responsible for making the literacy PowerPoint for her grade level. When digital learning began, some teachers would simply assign "Raz-Kid" assignments. Rakel felt like that was not teaching instead, it was just giving them assignments. Thus, Rakel stuck with the planned lessons, and she recorded herself using Loom so that her students could see the same lesson across her classes. Rakel explained they understood the lesson, but the feedback was not instantaneous because students had to log in to see her comments. Rakel has had to involve the parents more through digital learning by contacting her student's parents to ask them to have their child go back to look at an assignment for feedback. As such she feels that her students are not getting her teaching firsthand but instead getting her through their parents.

Digital learning has made her feel detached from her students. Rakel described how some teachers are doing Zoom classes every day or three times a week, but she is not. Rakel met with her students every Friday on Zoom to have a digital real-time video chat, but it is only once a week, and it is not about a lesson covered during the week but rather, she incorporated phonics into her meetings on Fridays. She also spent the first few minutes, letting the students get on and talk. Rakel allowed the students to show off their home space and share something to help keep that sense of community.

Mentoring Dilemmas: Not Knowing What to Ask and Time

Rakel was fortunate to have good mentors throughout her teaching career. However, one of her biggest challenges for her, and many others, is not knowing what to ask. We cannot know

what we do not know. Unfortunately, Rakel and her mentor were not able to plan lessons together because Rakel taught literacy and social studies in English, and her mentor taught science and math in Spanish. In the beginning, Rakel tried to incorporate Spanish into her class, however, as time went on, she discontinued the idea.

One of Rakel's teaching dilemmas is trying to fit everything into the day, especially when it comes to retesting her students. Finding the time is challenging. Rakel also struggles with making sure that she gives the students who are gifted the attention they deserve. There are numerous responsibilities placed upon a classroom teacher, making it challenging to give students the proper education. Like Rakel, I struggle with meeting the needs of all my students. I am Gifted, and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsed and because of this, I am my students' gifted teacher, their ESOL teacher, and if any of my students qualify their Early Intervention Program (EIP) teacher. Among being their classroom teacher, I also am expected to provide service as well. Rakel asserts all responsibilities are placed on the classroom teacher, thus creating more work for teachers.

Moreover, Rakel hates grading and feels that it is an ongoing dilemma for her. Our school students cannot receive a score lower than 70 making grades an inaccurate representation of a child's academic ability. If a child failed an assignment, they were allowed multiple retakes with their passing score replacing their failing grade. Finding time to reassess students is a constant battle. Another challenge that Rakel faces is there is no time to complete tasks during the day, so teachers either have to take work tasks home, stay late, or come super early, but nothing gets done because we are always with students and conference times get booked. "In my opinion, if you want to be effective, it usually can't be done all within the timeframe you're given. The dilemma is that every year you're expected to do everything in your free time, your

time." Every teacher faces their dilemmas as an educator, and so to provide teachers with a mentor who can assist in overcoming challenges is potentially a powerful growth experience opportunity.

Mentorship Improvements

Rakel is an experienced teacher and has taught in various places in the United States and overseas. Several suggestions to improve mentorship programs are 1) mentor pairing 2) professional developments for mentors, and 3) multiple mentors. A mentor should be someone who displays care by volunteering. The mentee should observe teachers who demonstrate excellence in their classrooms during their lessons and with their students. Finding those teachers that display excellence can be difficult. However, she feels after a few years a school can tell which teachers do the bare minimum in their classroom and which teachers go above and beyond. Unfortunately, in teaching, we equate excellence with going above and beyond rather than respecting teacher's free time outside of the workplace thus creating an either impossible or inappropriate standard.

Another suggestion Rakel has for improving mentorship programs is to consider pairing partner teachers. Partner teachers make for a good mentor, like in Rakel's situation, because they shared the same students through team-teaching. Although her partner-teacher does not teach English, she made a good mentor because they worked together on things like parent communication and they knew the same group of students. Rakel further thinks that people selected as mentors should be teachers that want to mentor:

Sometimes there are teachers, I'm not saying from my experience but from other people who I've talked to, who are also new to the school. It's like their mentor...they don't

always get an answer. Or I think the mentor should be thinking ahead. Like, if you're

going to be a mentor, you should always think, okay, my mentee doesn't know this. So I

need to go to them ahead of time, instead of letting them be the last one to find out about,

oh, this is coming up.

Unfortunately, many times, teachers selected as mentors do not volunteer and leave mentee

teachers feeling as though mentoring is an additional responsibility on their plate.

Another suggestion Rakel makes for improving mentorship programs is that mentors

should have a short one-day professional development on being a mentor. The training should

not just be about how to answer questions. Rakel believes that the mentors should go to the

mentees with openness and carve out time just for their mentees. Most of the time, mentors go

through the expectations of the school or cafeteria procedures, but being a mentor is more than

procedures. Rakel states, "It could be several things. It could be how we do procedures in the

school, how you teach a certain subject, how the school wants lessons written. Or how to write

an email to a parent. I think the mentee doesn't always know what to ask or doesn't want to

bother. So I think the mentor should come to the mentee." Teachers selected to mentor need to

know how to be a mentor. There is a common misconception that just because someone is an

excellent teacher, they will be a good mentor. Providing mentors with the tools they need to

assist their mentee would be beneficial and support success.

Rakel asserts that having more than one mentor would be beneficial because this way, the

mentee can get the assistance they need in various areas. Having more than one mentor can also

prevent the mentee from feeling like they are bothersome to their mentor and asking too many

questions. Regarding mentor-mentee pairings, one mentor definitely should be the same grade

level while Rakel suggests the other mentor pairing based on interest or based on an area the mentee would like to improve. For example:

> So let's say the mentee maybe wants just to get better and implement gifted strategies or put that in their every day or weekly practice. So then maybe their other mentor could be the gifted teacher. Or if, like me before, I said, one of my weaknesses was SST data. You know, I could have someone on the grade level, be the mentor as far as grade level stuff and then whoever in the school is like the data and RTI guru could be the other mentor, so I guess it would be someone on your grade level, but then also, I guess, someone who's somewhat of an expert or strong in an area that that teacher also wants to be strong in.

Furthermore, matching teachers goes further than which teacher is available. Selecting mentor teachers should be based on excellence displayed in the classroom/students, area of expertise, and grade level (Bullough, 2012; Catapano & Huisman, 2013; Russell & Russell, 2011). Much of the time, mentor selection is an afterthought, which then creates new teachers with a feeling of needing more.

Opportunities for Cultural Proficiency

Rakel has taught mostly in schools with large Latinx communities. Rakel likes teaching students who are racially different because she can get to know them. "I want to show interest. I found that over the years, if a child says something about themselves, whether you're acting interested or you are interested, if you ask a question, then that child is now all eager to tell you about it," said Rakel. She likes learning about some of the traditions her students follow at home and show personal interest because it builds student confidence. In particular, Rakel enjoys the

Latinx community. In general, she feels the parents are very pleasant, the kids are sweet, and there is no pushback. She knows from attending various professional developments (PD) that it is in their culture to respect the teacher. Rakel has been told at a PD at a different school "if the parents aren't here and present and active it's because they didn't grow up that way. It's because they upbringing that, you know, they send their kids to school and they trust the teacher to do what they do." Rakel can tell with the interactions between the teacher and the parent that, "In that community, they respect the teacher and they expect their kids to show that same respect also. So it's just so the kids and the parents are just very pleasant." By understanding the traditions and customs of various cultures, it can provide crucial insight into the students sitting in your classroom.

Rakel feels because she is African American, she might understand another African American child's behavior better. Another example Rakel gave, is that an African American child could appear not to be paying attention if they turn circles on the floor or appear to be disrespectful. However, because Rakel grew up in a similar culture, that behavior does not bother her, and she might understand it better than another teacher. She believes her cultural background might make a difference in how she, as a teacher, reacts to some of her students, whereas someone else of a different racial background might respond differently. However, she does not believe her cultural background influences her instructional decisions as far as teaching content. Instead, she describes her cultural background and influences the way she delivers the content. For example:

> I like to incorporate music kind of like urban and fun but not really because I didn't even
> grow up really in an urban setting, but I think that the fact that my culture is very loud.
> We're loud and we love music and we love to like, beat on the table and make everything

into a beat. I think that's probably why I incorporate a lot of that, because it's just natural

to me. So yeah, as far as content, I think it doesn't really have anything to do but as far as

delivery, yeah.

All humans have prejudices, it is something we cannot avoid (DiAngelo, 2018). Our biases as

humans influence their teaching decisions, whether we realize it or not.

Part of her efforts to adapt lessons to students' liking, Rakel often delivers her lessons

through music. It is natural for a beat to come to her head, and soon she is beating on a table and

singing a song she made for her students about the setting and character in the story. Rakel

states, "I would just start with alright y'all, the sett-ing is where it is, the stor-y happ-ened and we

would do this little funky beat." She describes how they would sing the song repeatedly until

everybody memorized the song and the language arts lesson, too. Rakel often incorporates a little

bit of hip hop to help her student understand the content in her class, and she explains how

including music in her class comes so effortlessly to her. Rakel is not sure how to make learning

fun for everyone, but she knows for sure a lot of children like music, which is why she tries to

incorporate music in her teaching.

Rakel also tries to read books that represent other cultures to find a connection to the

book and that lesson. For example, Rakel had a Muslim student this year, so she found a book on

Raz Kids about Ramadan, she purposely read that one to her class. Rakel tries to pull specific

books her students will be interested in but feels she can always do better:

I can admit that because I'm Black, I probably choose more Black books than anything

else with Black characters. Ummm, but I try to, you know, to mix it up some, but as far

as interest outside of culture, I guess I don't take much time. Except maybe once I did

have a kid who was gung-ho about dinosaurs, so whenever I saw a dinosaur book, I was like, oh, let's grab this one. We can use it there somewhere. I guess I'm more focused on books with different races of people.

Rakel tries to be purposeful when selecting texts to read aloud to her students, including their cultures and traditions.

Furthermore, Rakel incorporates discussions around culture within reading lessons and tries to include if it comes up in social studies. Rakel would like to talk about culture more but feels that it does not fit into the curriculum. Rather, like many teachers, she may not know how to incorporate culture into the curriculum. Discussing culture can seem like a random topic. Rakel believes she must stick with the pacing, the standards and cannot deviate from the scope and sequence. When Rakel was planning for Black History Month, she stuck with the standards and made sure to choose books of famous or notable African Americans. "So I guess I could do the same thing with all the other months, the Women's History Month and Native Americans and Hispanic, you know, put forth the same effort. I guess I could," said Rakel. When the expectation is only to teach specific standards and get students to perform well on assessments of those standards; taking time to embed discussions surrounding race and culture can seem daunting. For many years, like Rakel, I thought of the standards as taught separately to students from race and culture. In reality, the standards taught to our students should include race and culture rather than teaching them individually, on the side, and did not know how to incorporate it into my lessons.

Moreover, since her mentor was Colombian, Rakel believes she could be a resource to help her better understand the Spanish community. Rakel is interested in finding out more about the Spanish community like:

What kind of music do they like because I find that when you do anything with music, the kids are more much more attentive. Or is there like a Spanish game that is specific to the culture that I can incorporate it into a reading activity? I don't know. Just asking what is specific to that community and then thinking about how I could bring that in class. Whether it is a lesson or to a center or a game and still make it relevant to the learning. I mean, just asking what are some cultural-specific things like games, music people, something that everybody knows. You're part of the community and thinking of bringing it in.

Rakel tries to create a classroom environment where everyone respects all cultures. However, she is not intentional about creating this classroom environment and feels she can improve.

As for her current school, Rakel has not seen anyone purposefully practice culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The school has International Night, where the students can learn a little bit about someone else's country and share their own. However, culturally responsive practices as a norm or common purpose the whole school does not embrace. She does not believe there is a problem within the school where teachers need to implement culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The purpose of implementing culturally responsive pedagogy is not an intervention to fix issues that arise. Instead, Ladson-Billings (1995) stresses the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy as including students' cultural backgrounds, interests, and lived experiences in all aspects of education and learning within the classroom and across the school. For example:

I mean, it's not a big deal, it's not to me, it's not an issue. Like, I don't see kids in the school, I don't know, laughing at someone's culture or saying eww what is that you're

eating or oh, how is that your dress? Like, I guess since I don't see that. That's what I

mean, it's not a big deal. Like it's not an issue in the school. Like there hasn't been some

situation where this big issue has happened. So now we have to talk about respecting

each other's culture and being culturally responsive. I guess, there is always a need, but I

haven't seen a need as far as something negative happened, and now we gotta do

something about it. Like that hasn't happened.

Although Rakel does not perceive that culturally responsive pedagogy is needed, it does not

mean her current school would not benefit from culturally responsive practices in their

classrooms.

Rakel suggests beginning with a simple change like cultural awareness during the

designated cultural heritage months. For example, February is Black History Month, Hispanic

Heritage Month is September, November is Native American month, etc. If the school was

intentional about doing something for those months and those cultures by setting aside a couple

of days, it might increase awareness. However, Rakel is hesitant because she does not want to

put anything else on the teacher's plates.

Nevertheless, she thinks it would be nice if there were some type of cultural awareness

campaign assigned to every month. Rakel knows the awareness for Black History Month is

significant, but the Black teachers make it well known. She wonders who would take the lead for

Asian Pacific or Native American Heritage Month. The exposure would be positive for the

students to get even a little bit of exposure to other traditions people are doing, clothing, and

celebrations. She suggests that even something small, like sharing with students that other people

eat different foods, might make help bring awareness. She suggests these as a scaffold to more in-depth lessons on cultural awareness as students go up in grade levels.

Rakel considers social studies as the best time to incorporate more cultural awareness. She suggested that teachers could focus on standards for about three weeks and then one week on a related cultural topic; that way, teachers do not have to worry about breaking the pacing. This way, teachers are secure; they will not get into trouble for teaching culture rather than teaching the standards. Lessons could embed culturally responsive pedagogy if they align to standards, however, she thinks connecting them is extra work for teachers. Premade lessons that ensure culture was embedded would be better. No teacher wants more work. Rakel asserts, "Nobody wants to do more, especially when today's plans are done. We are not changing them. I worked hard on them last year, we're not changing them and then it's like, oh, we're gonna incorporate culture and it's like, oh, crap." Recall earlier, Rakel expressed concern how more is often placed on the shoulders of teachers, robbing them of work time, lesson planning, and other tasks.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I further analyze from the data presented in Chapter 4 to discuss the themes of the study presented in the narrative threads. This chapter also includes further discussion of the implication for action, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks.

Summary of the Study

In this study, I captured three mentors' and three mentee teachers' experiences and needs while participating in a mentoring program using a narrative inquiry methodology. With over half of teachers leaving the profession within their first five years (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2017), mentor programs became widespread in schools through No Child Left Behind (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001) as a way to provide support to new teachers to help them become successful in the teaching profession (Mullen, 2011). However, the role of a mentor is complex when implemented at the local school level mentor programs, even in the same school district were enforced differently within school. In most schools, many administrators select teachers they believe to be qualified to be a mentor based on their teaching success or years of experience (Hobbs & Stovall, 2015) based on the assumption that if teachers can teach children, they can also teach adults. A better system would be to recruit volunteers to mentor others (Catapano & Huisman, 2013).

Furthermore, not all great teachers necessarily make effective mentors, leading to many teachers who are selected as mentors to feel unprepared or unsupported in the role of mentor (Ambrosetti, 2014; Russell & Russell, 2011). Very little research has been conducted with the respect to those teachers that volunteer to mentor and their motivation behind volunteering for

the role versus those teachers that are volunteered to mentor by their administration. Lidia stated, "Just because you've taught at a school for so long, or you know the way of the school doesn't always mean that you're going to be the best person to turn around then and help someone else." With many mentors being selected by administration, motivations of why teachers want to mentor other teachers needs to be investigated further. Naomi suggests, "Schools need to get teacher buy-in or provide some type of perk for those teachers that volunteer as a mentor because it all starts with those teachers that are willing." Mentoring requires more than academic success or years of experience but must incorporate the willingness to assist another teacher by providing support. Ramon believes "Teachers should be selected to mentor based on their willingness rather than being 'voluntold' by the administration because there is so much responsibility placed on teachers, that asking them to mentor is adding something additional to their plate." Teachers who become mentors should not feel as though mentoring is a burden placed upon them, but instead that they are providing guidance and support to others in need of their own accord.

In addition, little to no professional development is typically provided to mentors (Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012), causing many mentors to rely on their own experiences to assist mentees. Without proper guidance on how to best assist mentees, mentors are lost and unsure of how to best help. This is especially true when supporting an experienced teacher. "One of my fears while mentoring was never genuinely knowing what my mentee needed from me or how I could best help her," described Lidia. When mentors are unsure of how to best help their mentee, many resort to their own lived experiences, some positive, some negative (Lortie, 1975). This often leaves mentors and mentees with strained relationships or makeshift techniques designed to help them to simply "just survive the year."

On the contrary, many mentor programs focus on long-term development and are designed to provide support to novice teachers, they usually span the length of one year before those teachers are exited from the program (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Mentees are not always novice teachers and may consist of teachers new to a school, who bring different needs than the mentor program may offer novice teachers. Rakel stated, "So then I don't always want to ask if I don't know, because I am supposed to be the one everyone thinks, you're so great. You're so great. You're so great. Then it's like, but I'm not in this area, I don't know." Teachers are expected to differentiate lessons for students. Yet professional developments are rarely differentiated for teachers, thus, leaving many teachers without the support they truly need to grow in education. Breanna believes, "You need someone to help you with difficult situations. You need someone to give you advice based on what they see. You need a neutral individual in the building to help with that. I think if teachers saw that I'm doing good by helping this person because they're struggling, not like they just need me because I was assigned to you. I think that would change the way mentorships are looked at." Very little research has been done to understand the structure of mentor programs when assisting experienced teachers new to a school or a school system, leaving room for further research. Although both novice and veteran teachers may be new to a school setting, each teacher has different needs for building their professional capital based on the experience they bring (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012).

Purpose of this Study

As I reviewed the literature on teacher mentor programs there was a noticeable gap in the types of professional developments both mentors and mentees receive while in the program. Much of the literature stated that many mentors are selected by administrator, but an area to further research is those mentors that self-volunteer and their motivation behind volunteering to

mentor. I also noticed there is a noticeable gap within the research for how to use mentorship programs to develop culturally proficient leaders. Thus, I aim in this study to add to the body of knowledge of mentors' and mentees' needs to further help develop professional developments to sustain growth in education.

Thus, the purpose of my study is to bring awareness to the needs of both mentor and mentee teachers in a mentor program and co-construct the program to build their professional capital within education (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Through a socioconstructivist lens, this qualitative narrative inquiry allowed me to understand multiple perspectives but also consider how other individuals acquire knowledge. Approaching this study with narrative inquiry allowed for my participants and I to co-construct and understand our mentorship stories. Using narrative inquiry, my participants shared personal experiences with mentorship and their use of social justice and equity in their classrooms. Narrative inquiry lends itself to stories being told that otherwise those sharing may not view important outside themselves. However, once collected and analyzed, I found commonalities among the participants' stories for changes that need to be made to a school's mentorship to foster growth and mitigate further teacher attrition. Understanding these commonalities are essential in building much-needed community and collaboration among and between teachers.

The research question guiding this study is: What are the mentorship experiences and needs of mentors and mentees in a diverse elementary school setting? Using narrative inquiry for this study provides an understanding of the experiences of three mentors and three mentees through their stories and experiences with mentorship. Connelly & Clandinin (2006) believe the lives of people are shaped by the stories of who they are and how they interpret their past. A story is a portal in which a person enters the world by which their experience is made meaningful

(Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Through the narrative inquiry approach, the mentors and mentees shared their experiences with mentorship and cultural proficiency for continued growth in this profession. Sharing their experiences and perspectives provides valuable feedback for change on their own campus which others may find valuable as well when considering the design of the mentorship program.

Narrative Threads

In Chapter 4, each participant told a very different story of their experiences as a mentor or mentee. Although their stories were individual and unique, common narrative threads emerged among the participants that also spoke to my own experiences as both a mentor and a mentee while in a mentor program. My hope is these participant's stories of their experiences and the narrative threads that weave between them speak to other mentors and mentees and will shape future mentoring experiences. The narrative threads that emerged across our stories were: 1) universal mentorship, 2) opportunities for cultural proficiency and 3) professional goals.

The Need for Universal Mentorship

The first narrative thread I discovered was a need for universal mentorship. In Chapter 1, I discussed various definitions of mentoring and depending on how the local school describes the role, mentoring could be defined differently. For this study, I used the following definition of mentoring:

> the concept of mentoring can refer to acts of accompanying, respecting,
> collaborating, listening, and trusting in which the mentee, someone who needs
> assistance and support, is entrusted into the hands of a well-informed and

intelligent person who can formally and confidently provide guidance and help.

(Mathipa & Matlabe, 2016, p. 37)

Most schools understand a mentor as someone that helps or assists a novice teacher, yet this definition and most definitions do not define a mentee as necessarily a new teacher. However, a mentor is so much more than that. Even through my initial mentoring experience almost a decade ago, the mentor I was assigned to was just that, simply someone who was assigned to me. As the definition above states, my mentor was formally assigned to me because I needed assistance and support, however our relationship lacked trust, collaboration, and she did not provide me guidance or help to grow as an educator. I found solace and comfort in the two other novice teachers that year and although they knew just about as much as I did, they supported me in ways my mentor did not.

The relationship I formed with my colleague novice teachers was built on trust. Although they were not experienced, assigned mentors, the bond we built that year in how we relied on one another is what got us through our first year of teaching. I have now found that my experience is all too common among many novice teachers. In Lane's narrative, she describes how two of the three teachers on her hall were also first-year teachers. She felt confiding in those teachers was helpful, even if it was to just feel that she was not alone because they all had similar struggles. A mentor is more than an assignment given to a teacher or an additional responsibility added to a teacher's workload. A mentor is someone who provides support no matter the years of experience and goes about forming a trusting relationship. The problem is as a novice teacher, my colleague teachers and I were not in the hands of a well-informed mentor whom we

trusted to assist us with the challenges we faced - and neither was Lane - forcing us to rely on each other to provide guidance.

Much of the time, mentors are assigned based on grade or content level. Ramon admitted that he did not want to mentor initially. However, since both he and his mentee were in the Dual Language Program, being paired together was seen as a good fit by the administration. Although Ramon felt his mentorship experience worked out in the end, not all mentorship pairings are that lucky and he was initially very skeptical. A recommendation for improving mentoring is to assign mentors not only based on grade levels but also in their areas of expertise to assist other teachers grow where they feel weakest. Naomi suggests, "Mentors do not have to be assigned based on grade level, but instead, mentors and mentees could be paired based on interests or topics they have in common." For Breanna, Rakel, and so many teachers like them, coming to a new school as an experienced teacher and being assigned a mentor was not necessarily beneficial to meet their individual needs. Rather, teachers similar to Breanna and Rakel may find a mentor assignment more helpful if paired with someone that can assist in the specific areas needed for professional growth. Breanna suggests, "Whether a teacher is new, or they are someone who thinks they might know everything, it is crucial to have a mentorship with someone who is an expert in the school readily available to give those resources and advice to people who is struggling or just wanting to talk." Further contributing to universal mentorship is this idea of multiple mentors where all teachers are provided various mentors, skilled in a variety of topics, rather than just one person to help with everything thus expanding the knowledge base and collaboration across the faculty.

Each of the six participants expressed the importance of mentorship whether they were a mentor or mentee and the need for mentors even for experienced teachers. Much of the time, when we think of mentoring in education, we associate mentoring programs with novice teachers. Many schools utilize mentor programs by providing support only to new teachers or those teachers new to a school which means we in education need to shift our thinking in regard to the purpose of a mentorship and who might qualify to participate. With most mentor programs lasting for just one school year, the purpose of a mentor needs to embrace the idea of universal mentoring rather than assigning a mentor for a single year solely to assist a novice teacher or one new to the school. There are a lot of components that teachers need support with from their mental health, to learning how to have racial and cultural conversations to implementing culturally relevant practices. Assigning one mentor to assist with all of teachers' needs is not realistic and therefore mentoring should be seen as a term that is more universal where multiple people provide their expertise rather than relying on one person.

For Rakel, and many teachers with multiple years of experience, they have a clear understanding of what assistance is needed for to grow professionally as an educator. Being new to her school this year, her mentor helped support Rakel to the best of her ability but teaching different subjects and different languages made it difficult to support more Rakel beyond parent communication. In this case, having more than one mentor would have been valuable because one mentor could help her adjust to life at a new school while the other mentor's focus could be the areas Rakel wants to grow in. Although Rakel has been teaching for years, she admits struggling to have learned the Response to Intervention (RTI) and Student Support Team (SST) process. Having a teacher that is an expert in the area of RTI and SST mentor Rakel to help overcome it as a weakness would be a good use of mentorship resources.

Professional Capital

The second narrative thread I found that wove throughout my participants' stories was the lack of professional capital. In Chapter 2, I examined how Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) promoted professional capital, which could potentially transform education for the better by describing specific beneficial skills, dispositions, and networked structures that educators possess and develop as professionals. Three types of capital make up professional capital: human, social, and decisional. Human capital is defined in teaching as having and developing the requisite knowledge and skills of the profession p. 89). Social capital is defined in teaching as enabling teachers to learn from each other within and across schools – as well as building cultures and networks of communication, learning, trust, and collaboration around the teaching team p. 89). Lastly, decisional capital is defined as the ability to make discretionary judgments in a professional setting p. 93). Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) suggest human, social, and decisional capital must be built to achieve professional capital.

Through building a strong mentorship program that focus on equity, social justice, content, and cultural proficiency (Lindsey et al., 2019), professional capital can be achieved. To achieve human capital, teachers need to understand how to best instruct their subjects to the diverse student in their classrooms. Mentorship programs need to incorporate this as part of their curriculum so teachers can implement culturally relevant practices in their classroom. Naomi believes, "Teachers cannot just have conversations, but there need to be actions put into place for what this would look like in their classroom." However, without properly providing teachers with the tools for having conversations on equity and social justice and how to implement those into their classroom, schools and districts are failing to help teachers achieve social capital which

in turn fails to build their professional capital. To achieve social capital, teachers need to collaborate. Ramon and his mentee worked closely together, creating a truly collaborative relationship. He even joked they became each other's therapist by being able to voice grievances and voice celebrations. Ramon and his mentee's relationship were one where both involved learned from one another, forming a relationship that allowed growth (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Contrary to Ramon's mentorship, administration replaced Lane's mentor with thus creating a lack of collaboration. Lane cannot recall a time in which she truly collaborated with the instructional coach, but rather the instructional coach created and planned the lessons. The coach helped filling out papers or writing up data on students, but she did not consider that collaboration. Lane, and many teachers who relate to her experience, in working with instructional coaches are left without an opportunity to build her social capital.

Lastly, for decisional capital to be acquired, teachers need to be able to make informed decisions based on experience rather than making poor judgments and implementing ineffective practices. When mentorship programs are not investing in the professional developments of those teachers selected as mentors, many mentors fall back on their own lived experiences and feel unprepared (Ambrosetti, 2014; Russell & Russell, 2011). Lidia felt that for her, it was a challenge to figure out what her mentee truly needed help with because she did not want to give her mentee information that she did not as a veteran teacher. If one of the tenets of professional capital is lacking, then a teacher will not be able to achieve professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Schools and districts must further utilize mentor programs as an opportunity to foster professional growth through the use of building culturally proficient leaders (Lindsey et al., 2019), nurture collaboration and create opportunities for teachers to make informed decisions. Supporting the full professional capital development of teachers indicates that the

administration and district values their employees and supports a strong vested interest in the overall well-being of their most precious resource – educators. Further research is still needed to understand how schools foster professional capital using mentorship programs.

Opportunities for Cultural Proficiency

The third narrative thread that I discovered among my participants was opportunities for cultural proficiency. As I began questioning my participants around race and culture, I noticed some of my participants were more willing to have discussions with me than others. Without providing mentors ongoing professional development addressing the unknown prejudices and bias they bring to the classroom, Kardos & Johnson (2010) assert mentors can unknowingly negatively influence their mentees' beliefs, especially those teachers working in high needs areas. Both Lidia and Ramon expressed difficulty when answering some of the questions regarding working with students' cultural backgrounds different from their own. They struggled to discuss in what ways their own cultural background influenced their teaching practice. While speaking to Lidia, I could tell she was uncomfortable with some of the questions I asked regarding race or culture because she paused between her answers, saying umm or "I don't know" a lot and referred to feeling awkward when holding conversations about race with anyone and especially with her students.

As I questioned Ramon, he laughed and told me that I was asking hard questions. He paused between questions, sometimes saying he was not sure how to answer. There are so many teachers like Ramon and Lidia who are not sure where to begin or how to have conversations on race and culture. Many teachers ardently avoid discussing those topics because they are uncomfortable. DiAngelo (2018) describes *white fragility* as the structure of the smallest amount racial stress is intolerable – the mere suggestion that being white has meaning often triggers a

range of defensive responsive such as emotions like anger, fear, guilt, and behaviors like argumentativeness, silence, and withdrawal from the stress-inducing situation by people who identify as white (p. 2). Only a few years ago, I was like Lidia and Roman. I was uncomfortable and would avoid the topic of race or culture at all costs. Not only are having these conversations crucial among educators, but teachers need the tools to know how to have these conversations with their students, too. Once teachers are able to address biases or prejudices, teachers will be able to appropriately implement culturally relevant practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995) in their classrooms.

Although Rakel did not express difficulty answering the questions regarding working with students with different backgrounds other than her own, she did not believe her cultural background influenced her instructional practices. She views implementing culturally relevant practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995) as an intervention for when students are making fun of each other rather than a pedagogical approach. For example, Rakel stated:

> I mean, it's not a big deal, it's not to me, it's not an issue. Like, I don't see kids in the school, I don't know, laughing at someone's culture or saying eww what is that you're eating or oh, how is that your dress? Like, I guess since I don't see that. That's what I mean, it's not a big deal. Like it's not an issue in the school. Like there hasn't been some situation where this big issue has happened. So now we have to talk about respecting each other's culture and being culturally responsive. I guess, there is always a need, but I haven't seen a need as far as something negative happened, and now we gotta do something about it. Like that hasn't happened.

In order to become a culturally proficient leader, professional development must be continuous as the process for growth is never truly finished (Lindsey et al., 2019).

In Chapter 2 I explained the culturally proficiency continuum (Lindsey et al., 2019). The continuum is comprised of six phases: cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural precomptence, cultural competence and cultural proficiency (Lindsey et al., 2019). The continuum can be used as an assessment tool to assess the cultural proficiency level of an individual or organization based on educators' expressed values and behaviors and schools' enacted policies and practices.

The first three points described are composed of unhealthy values, behaviors, and policies:

- *Cultural Destructiveness* is characterized by individuals who see the differences in cultures and seek to eliminate them. Cultural destructiveness often involves macro aggressions with extreme examples being genocides and slavery.

- *Cultural Incapacity* is portrayed by extreme bias and belief of superiority of one's cultures and beliefs. An example can be White supremacy, the belief that being White is inherently better than any other race.

- *Cultural Blindness* is when people see the cultural differences and dismiss them. In this phase, people often say things like: "Color does not exist" or "I do not see colors, I only see and teach students."

The following three points represent healthy behaviors and values toward demonstrating cultural proficiency:

- *Cultural Precompetence* is when people recognize what they don't know. This phase is about the awareness of one's limitations when interacting with other cultures. An example could be hearing teachers say: "We are trying to teach the students and reach their diverse needs, but unsure of how to adapt to the new demographics."

- *Cultural Competence* is when people see the differences; understand, accept, and respect those differences. An example could be when leaders adopt culturally relevant leadership and curriculum, advocate for changes in policies etc.

- *Cultural Proficiency* is when people respond positively and affirmingly to differences, advocate, and always learn. An example would be utilizing the school to interact with colleagues, students, and the community to advocate for lifelong learners for all cultural groups.

Based on the stories and responses of the participants and using the culturally proficiency continuum, most of the teachers fell between *cultural blindness* and cultural *precompetence*. Lidia admits that she might be one of the only people that does not take culture into consideration because she just treats all the kids the same. Contrary to Lidia, Lane believes her school needs to begin addressing issues of race and culture with their students and staff instead of ignoring them and pretending they do not exist. Both Breanna and Naomi understand how crucial having conversations centered around race and culture but know there needs to be more action taken for teachers to know how to begin to have those conversations and to also implement culturally responsive practices in their classroom. To move forward along the continuum toward becoming cultural proficient, teachers, Bramble Elementary, and Grand County must first acknowledge their role in oppressing others. All educators pass through a system that perpetuates racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression as they transmit their values (Lindsey et al., 2019). However, a culturally proficient leader understands this process and is aware of how the subtle ways privilege and oppression are fostered (Lindsey et al., 2019). These leaders work to challenge their coworkers to value the diversity within the school and to take steps needed to make diversity present in the school setting (Lindsey et al., 2019).

Mentorship programs can be used to build professional capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) by creating culturally proficient leaders within the school among both the mentors and mentees. Further research still needs to be conducted on how mentorships are utilized to created culturally proficient leaders.

Moreover, conversations addressing race and cultural topics are few and far between in many schools because it makes most people, teachers included, uncomfortable (DiAngelo, 2018). Teachers are taught they should "love" all their students, but many teachers, especially white teachers, are never provided professional development to this end. One example of an important professional development for teachers to have would be on *abolitionist teaching* (Love, 2019). Love (2019) defines an abolitionist teaching as "the practice of working in solidarity with communities of color while drawing on the imagination, creativity, refusal, (re)membering, visionary thinking, healing, rebellious spirit, boldness, determination, and subversiveness of abolitionists to eradicate injustice in and outside of school" (p. 2). As both a white and female teacher, I did not engage in professional learning to address and understand my own white privilege until I entered my doctoral program four years ago as a sixth-year experienced teacher. Just four years ago, I was still that teacher who "loved all my students equally and did not see color." As a classroom teacher, trainings or professional developments were not available to me so that I could know how to work best with students with backgrounds other than my own. Unfortunately, I fell into the trap, like so many others, of forming opinions of certain groups of students based upon the deficit views of my mentor, veteran teachers, and my own unknown biases. Only after going through my doctoral journey and taking the time to address what biases I brought to my classroom, was I then able to understand the severe injustice I was doing as a teacher by not acknowledging that all my students were indeed not the same, but

individual and unique and deserved equity! Providing teachers with the tools they need to begin to have these important conversations and practice abolitionist teaching (Love, 2019) will allow for deficit views of groups of students to be mitigated and work towards equity in schools.

Selecting a mentor based on their academic success or their years of experience is no longer enough. With the diversity of the student population ever changing, education needs to begin taking notice that teachers need professional development in how to work with cultures other than their own. Further research still needs to be done on how mentoring programs address the harmful racial and cultural biases, prejudices, and stereotypes mentors and mentees bring with them into the classroom and strategies for working through them.

Professional Goals

The last narrative thread I discovered among my participants was their ideas of professional goals. Education is known to have roughly 50% of teachers leaving the profession before their fifth year (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Some of my participants found discussing professional goals easier than others. Regardless of their required annual evaluation goal setting exercise, teachers very rarely speak about their professional goals causing many teachers to become unsure when asked. Providing both new and experienced teachers with a mentor allows teacher to focus on their goals outside of an evaluation setting and find ways to obtain them as an opportunity to pursue professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). At both Bramble Elementary and Grand County, teachers' professional goals are tied to evaluations leaving teachers rare opportunities to speak about their professional goals, why they could be useful, and how to accomplish them. For example, all my participants spoke of professional goals, yet not a single participant spoke of a goal on which they are evaluated.

Teachers are lifelong learners and want to find ways to continuously improve for the best interest of themselves and their students. For example, as of now, Ramon does not have an end goal in mind, but instead will just figure out what he can do today that will be better for his students and wants to continue to stay in the classroom and teach. However, in Grand County, professional goals are a way to hold teachers accountable rather than viewed as an area for continuous growth, professional capital development (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), or as a means for professional value and sustenance.

Thus, I wanted to know what my participants' professional goals it was as might help me understand the attrition rate. I am a very goal-oriented person and am constantly setting goals for myself to reach. Although I have continuously set my own professional goals, I have rarely had an administrator ask me what they were. My professional goals are constantly changing and evolving as I learn and grow, especially during my time as a doctoral student. I came into teaching thinking I would stay a teacher until I retired, only to decide by year five that I would position myself in a way so I could get out of the classroom. Although I have taught for ten years, it took me five years to make up my mind that I would not retire as a teacher because of the responsibilities and lack of respect teachers receive as professionals. This decision has been even more confirmed during this pandemic. As a teacher working through the pandemic, I view this as the lowest point I have seen education reach during my ten years because of the unrealistic responsibilities being placed on teachers by Bramble Elementary, Grand County and the community. They have demanded teachers to simultaneously teach in-person and digitally, and also ignore and refuse to address the glaring inequities within the district.

Using narrative inquiry, I learned each of my participants spoke of professional goals either as hoping to stay teaching in the classroom or eventually leave the classroom to take on a

new role. Contrary to Ramon, Lane admits that she does not feel she has a grasp on where she sees herself in this teaching career. She wants to teach a little longer at her current school and then possibly teach at a different school or county before deciding if classroom teaching is truly for her. Lidia also views herself as leaving the classroom and does not see teaching in the classroom as her end goal but wants to get out of classroom if not leave teaching altogether. After listening to my participant's stories, I cannot help but question if schools and districts are really doing anything to prevent teachers from leaving? Now that the pandemic has stretched on for several months, I am curious if my participants' professional goals have shifted since we last spoke. I know at Bramble Elementary, during the "normal" school year administration rarely discussed professional goals however the pandemic may have exacerbated this issue. Many teachers have areas they want to improve upon but without a feeling of support, teachers are left to either quit teaching or leave their school. Further research still needs to be done to investigate the professional goals of teachers and what is being done to support their goals as an educator.

Proposed Changes to Mentorship Programs

Based on the findings from this study, Bramble Elementary and Grand County need to make changes to the structure of their mentorship program at both the local and district level in order to better support teachers, and in turn, the students in their classrooms.

Local School

To begin, my recommendations for Bramble Elementary are to invest in rebuilding the mentor program in the school and create an incentive or perk to motivate teachers to volunteer to mentor. I recommend that mentor teachers earn a stipend because of the additional responsibility added to their workload. Bramble Elementary also needs to provide mentor teachers with the time needed to collaborate with their mentee. It is no secret that teachers hold many

responsibilities, however not providing teachers adequate time to ensure they are developing the skills needed in becoming effective mentors is not truly investing in the school's mentorship program.

My next recommendation for Bramble Elementary is for mentor teachers to receive professional development on mentorship and how to interact with their mentee. It is not enough for administration to select a teacher and give them the title of "Mentor". The role of mentor goes beyond the title, teachers placed into those positions also need to have continuous professional development on the responsibilities that come with mentorship. Bramble Elementary must also provide all of those involved with the mentorship program a flexible mentorship curriculum. As Naomi stated, this curriculum needs to be flexible to meet the needs of both new and experienced mentees, but must include equity, social justice content, cultural proficiency support for classroom implementation. By providing a flexible curriculum, teachers in the mentorship program can learn strategies and techniques to carry out in their class which allow them to see the relevance of the program even as an intermediate and veteran teacher.

Moreover, Lidia, Naomi, and I all expressed that time is another area that needs to be improved. With Bramble Elementary placing mentor meetings on the same day and time as other committee meetings and mentors not obligated to attend, finding time for mentors to meet with their mentees is difficult because the conflict in scheduling. The burden is placed on the mentors to figure out a schedule to meet with their mentees and most often those meetings are viewed as an added responsibility and pushed to the side. I recommend that administration designate a meeting time for the mentor and mentee and rather than creating an additional meeting, the mentors need to attend the mentee meetings. Another recommendation is to dedicate a director for the mentor program, and this director should not also be a classroom teacher. Balancing

working with new teachers and grade level responsibilities is incredibly challenging, which is

why most of the responsibilities of working with the new teachers end up falling on academic

coaches. However, as stated in Chapter 1, there are four main goals of an academic coach:

(1) Improve teachers' content knowledge;

(2) actuate research-based instructional strategies in classrooms;

(3) build teachers' capacity to use a variety of assessments to monitor student understanding
   and achievement;

(4) engage teachers in taking an inquiry approach to teaching (Driscoll, 2008, p. 40)

When academic coaches take on the role of a mentor, this can lead to a confusion between the

responsibilities between the academic coach and mentee and create mistrust. Currently at

Bramble Elementary there are five academic coaches with each coach assigned to a grade level.

With so many new teachers each year, the role of the academic coach often becomes blurred

between that of a mentor and instructional coach, leaving other teachers to feel unsupported. The

academic coaches are not properly utilized as stated by the definition earlier and therefore there

needs to be clear separation between academic coaches' responsibilities and those of the mentor.

Bramble Elementary and other schools with the high turnover rates needs to assign a non-

classroom teacher to assist the new teachers so the academic coaches can assist more teachers is

needed.

Lastly, mentorship programs must be differentiated based on the needs of the teachers.

Rather than providing new and experienced with the same curriculum, I recommend assessing

teachers based on the topics and levels of need, for example, equity, social justice, content, and

cultural proficiency. This can be done by surveying the both the new teachers and mentors to

determine what areas they feel they need more help in or what areas they feel they are experts in. Teachers are expected to differentiate lessons for their students, yet when we attend professional developments, they are usually one-size-fits-all and lack differentiation.

District Level

Based on the findings from this study and my own experiences with attempting to rebuild the mentor program, I recommend the resources that Grand County's mentoring program provides to its schools across the district must be more equitable both in content and distribution. The district must provide mentorship resources to all schools whether there is a lead mentor enrolled through the district mentor program or not. For starters, professional development for teachers selected as mentors is only offered to those teachers considered "lead mentors." Even then, those "lead mentors" must be enrolled in a special program through the district to qualify for the professional development, leaving teacher participation inequitable across the board. Administrators must notify the lead mentors of this program so they can sign up as required; it is not equitable that if the lead mentor is unable to enroll in the program that their school does not receive county mentorship resources. Another recommendation is that schools with high turnover rates need to be automatically provided with additional assistance from the district mentoring program as mentoring as a means to retain teachers, provide support, and develop professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Especially after enduring a year of teaching both synchronously and asynchronously during the pandemic, Grand County needs to be prepared for the high turnover rate because of how little the district has done to support teachers this year. Through much of Naomi's story, she reiterates the importance of having strong leadership and how that can make a huge impact on a school's climate. She believes, "When the administration and district support their teachers and have their well-being in mind, then the teachers feel they

can do their jobs successfully." If teachers believe their administration and the school district have their best interest in mind, schools are more likely to retain their staff. However, when teachers feel they are not valued by their administration or district then they often to look for alternative schools or employment.

Another recommendation for the district is to address the systemic racism that is ignored within the county. Although Grand County released a generic "Black Lives Matter and we will do better" statement in the summer of 2020 after the death of George Floyd, they have yet to release any plan for how the district would begin to move forward in becoming more inclusive or addressing systemic racism within the district. Rather, only a couple of weeks after school began in August of 2020, a teacher in Grand County received a phone call from Human Resources telling her to take down her Black Lives Matter poster in her classroom because it was visible to her students during Zoom classes. Making a statement and then reprimanding the educators in the district for being inclusive shows that the Grand County truly does not believe that Black Lives Matter nor that "they will do better." With almost 50% of the student population in the Grand County school system comprising Black or Latinx students, professional development needs to be provided to all its educators to address racial biases, support cultural proficiency (Brion, 2019), and how to best implement culturally relevant practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Each of the participants acknowledged incorporating literature from various cultures during their reading block or within social studies standards only. However, this integration of cultural relevance was initiated by each of the participants and not by the school or the district, leaving a severe blind spot for social justice in classroom curriculum. Although the participants mentioned that their school celebrates Black History Month, many of the participants admitted that

implementing culturally responsive practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995) across the school was not a focus which ultimately mirrors that it is not the focus of the district either.

Rather, the school and district prioritize achieving test scores and teaching to the standards. Zozakiewicz (2010) describes a cultural divide between students and teachers, which causes teachers to be lacking in culturally relevant practices and continue to avoid even conversations of equity and social justice much less to embrace culturally relevant teaching practices. With the teacher population as 88% white and female (Love, 2019), continuous professional development for teachers to prepare for how to become culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) is crucial in closing cultural divide and advocating for students in our classrooms.

As a teacher in Grand County, I have seen first-hand the district's lack of cultural proficiency during the Black Lives Matter Movements. Only months after releasing that statement, I listened to a white female school board member tell the only African American board member during a live board meeting that "she could strangle him" while another white male board member got called out by a student for retweeting messages containing Islamic insensitivities. Although both board members apologized for their actions, neither were held accountable for their actions and therefore again proved the district is failing to "do better." Since this time, the county has offered for one teacher from each school (selected by the principal) to attend a Culturally Responsive and Educational Equity Course. Although I applied to attend the course for my school as the lead mentor on my campus, I was not selected by my principal, again leaving questions about who receives professional developments.

If the district is truly looking to "do better" then I recommend that the equity course be mandatory for all Grand County employees including the board members, rather than one person

from each school. Not only do teachers in Grand County need practice addressing their own biases, but so do all employees. "Teachers who say they are deeply concerned about social justice or that they 'love all children' but cannot say the words 'Black Lives Matter' have no real understanding of what social justice is and what it truly means to love, find joy, and appreciate their students and their students' cultures" (Love, 2019, p.13). This statement holds true not only to teachers but to all employees in a school district. It is no longer enough to release generic statements or make racist comments as board members and then simply ask for forgiveness. I recommend Grand County holds itself accountable and begins to provide the professional development needed for ALL employees to become culturally proficient leaders (Lindsey et al., 2019).

More than Mentoring

When I first became a teacher 10 years ago, like many teachers, I wanted to the change the lives of my students. As each year passed in my teaching career, I grew as an educator and with growth came reflection. Today, I have come to learn that changing the lives of my students means something completely different to me than during my first year. As a first year teacher, my hope was for my students to like me. However, looking back, I realize that was not changing their lives, but instead my goal that year was a superficial wish. My journey as a doctoral student has shown me that although sometimes uncomfortable, understanding and acknowledging my own privilege is vital as a white educator. Only after entering my doctoral program did I come to terms with how I oppressed others in the past and have since then used that knowledge to help me to continue to grow. Especially in this past year with the ongoing pandemic, I have redefined my role as a teacher and found myself becoming more of a coconspirator. A coconspirator is someone who understands their privilege and works to challenge and undo patriarchy (Love,

2019, p. 118). Unfortunately, the ongoing pandemic has further amplified the inequities the teachers and students face that is specifically depicted in Bramble Elementary and Grand County. Since the beginning of the 2020 school year, I have taken part of a handful of in-person protests with a couple of hundred other teachers in hopes to demonstrate to Grand County that they need to do better by the students and teachers in the district and all employees need to be held accountable for their actions, not just the teachers. With decisions regarding synchronous and/or asynchronous lessons left to local schools, students must learn content depending on the decision their school makes regarding digital learning. Each school in Grand County has been required to figure out their own plan for dealing with digital learning which has exacerbated inequities in digital access, curriculum and instruction.

Even spanning across grade levels at Bramble Elementary teachers are implementing digital learning differently. With little to no guidance from administration, grade levels are left to figure out how to best manage both digital learning and in-person instruction. Breanna describes digital learning as a challenge to get kids to do the work. She had several students without a computer or who could not complete an assignment because they are doing it through their phone or tablet and some of the apps are not compatible with the device they are on. I have spoken to my administration several times about the unfairness of grading for both digital and in-person students, but am met with the school's decision to provide students with a Not Turned In (NTI) which equates to a zero in the grade book if a student has not submitted an assignment. This leaves many students failing and many teachers, including myself, to constantly hunt down students for assignments. If Grand County is really trying to "do better" as they stated this summer, then they will find a way to support struggling digital and in-person students rather than

just simply supply those students an NTI and hope they are responsible enough to make up the work on their own or place the responsibility on already overwhelmed teachers.

Furthermore, based on the findings from this study, it is no secret that historically, there is a lack of support and professional development for teachers. However, with the ongoing pandemic the lack of support and professional development is even more noticeable because teachers are not prepared for digital learning across the district. Teachers feel burnt out and are quickly forced to choose between their profession, finances, and their health. Naomi asserts that "Unfortunately, the mental health piece is not as crucial within schools because teachers have to be held accountable for their jobs." In October of 2020, one of the fourth grade teachers on my grade level announced she was not returning to teaching because Grand County was not providing a work from home option due to the pandemic. She had to choose between her family and her job, and she was able to – and chose - her family. The school year is not even halfway over and already teachers are leaving their jobs because of the unrealistic responsibilities placed upon them. When the superintendent of Grand County was asked about what he was going to do to help with the inevitable turnover of teachers this year, his response was that he hopes teachers stay but that Grand County is always recruiting. Teachers understand that teaching is hard work, but we also want to feel valued.

Moreover, this pandemic has caused trauma among teachers, students, and their families alike. However, rather than addressing the trauma experienced and finding ways to provide support, the trauma has been simply ignored. Maslach & Leiter (1997) suggest burnout is a syndrome of physical, emotional, and cognitive exhaustion that develops from extended exposure to situations that are emotionally demanding and stressful. Rather than pouring support into teachers in such a time of crisis to ensure they do not see the effects of burnout; additional

responsibilities are being placed upon them like teaching digital and in-person learning

simultaneously or enforcing unrealistic grading policies – which are hard on teachers and

students alike. With the lack of professional development equipping teachers for simultaneously

teaching digital learning and in-person learning, teachers are left to figure it out on their own

causing many teachers, myself included, to feel constantly frustrated and defeated.

Furthermore, while a mentor program could be a vehicle to provide some pandemic-

oriented support, the program has collapsed with the focus shifting toward pandemic task force

groups. The lack of stability and support provided to teachers only further elevates and

perpetuates the survival mentality and the idea of just "*get through this year.*" Although I am the

lead mentor, I have been unable to attend the mentor meetings due to other responsibilities

placed upon me by administration. I wonder if they view the importance and value in the

mentorship program or just see it as a committee they need for the school? In a year that needs a

mentorship program the most to help those teachers new to a school feel some type of

"normalcy," the program has hung on by a thread. Teachers should be in working environments

where they are not just "trying to survive" or constantly feeling like they are treading water

because eventually that further feeds into burnout, leading to turnover. Instead, teachers should

be in a work environment that is inclusive and supports educator's growth in this profession.

Although last year was my first year leading the mentor program and I managed the

program with no curriculum, I found it easier than this year. Last year we were able to meet

during our monthly meetings and have discussions about what was happening in mentee's

classrooms. This year due to the pandemic, our meetings are through Zoom, losing that personal

touch and human connection. Every single one of us are simply trying to figure out ways to

survive both digital and in-person teaching and, in our family, and home lives. The chaos of

decisions being made by leadership is exacerbating teacher burn-out. In a time of crisis, teachers need strong leadership to make decisions that are in the best interest of their staff rather than turning a blind eye to their constantly overwhelmed teachers. Even as a tenth-year teacher, teaching both digitally and in-person at the same time takes a toll both mentally and physically leaving me to continually feel that I am not providing my students with the best quality education and with a feeling of inadequacy.

Recommendations for Further Research

As I look to the future in education in Grand County, there is so much work that needs to be done toward improving the mentorship program to prepare for the inevitable influx of new teachers the district will experience after teaching through a year with a pandemic. Further research needs to be conducted on how the district and schools provide support to all teachers especially those beginning teachers who experienced their student teaching through the pandemic and any novice teacher who taught throughout the course of the pandemic. It is not enough to assign teachers with a mentor but instead these mentorship programs need to be continuously evaluated for effectiveness to determine if the programs are truly providing the support needed by the teachers.

Concluding Remarks: A Personal Reflection

Throughout my ten years of teaching I have grappled with the idea that roughly 50% of teachers leave within their first five years of teaching (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Although teachers leave for various reasons, I have seen numerous teachers quit over the years because of the lack of support provided and additional responsibilities steadily placed upon them by the administration, district, and the community. As I set out to

understand a way to help teachers through using a mentor program on the local level, I unearthed a system that is far from equitable and feeds into systemic racism. Through this doctoral journey I have come to acknowledge my privilege and have come to understand my role and responsibilities as a white female teacher. I do not claim to be the expert on improvements to mentor programs, but I do acknowledge that I was part of the problem of unknowingly oppressing others with my deficit views. With the majority of teachers identifying as white and female, providing ongoing professional development to address unknown biases or prejudices that are brought into the classroom and then unknowingly passed to other teachers especially through a mentoring relationship needs to be addressed. As a white and female teacher, I did not receive any professional development addressing my privilege, biases, or prejudices and how that can influence my role as a teacher until I began my journey as a doctoral student. Change is hard and uncomfortable, especially when you realize you are the one that needs to change the way you view the world. However, by taking the time to listen and learn I have grown in ways I never thought possible.

I began this study of my perception of mentoring. However, I have come to learn that mentoring is so much more than administrators selecting a veteran teacher to assist a novice teacher in understanding how to make copies or entering grades into the grade book. Instead, mentoring is about relationships formed and unknowingly passing on how we view education and our students, both good and bad. Schools desperately need mentorships and not just a program thrown together so it checks a box off on committee requirements. Instead, schools need to invest in mentorship programs to help foster teacher professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) and their cultural proficiency (Brion, 2019) because, in most cases, I have come to realize they are not getting that professional development anywhere else causing teachers to

leave this profession at an alarming rate discouraging others from teaching, costing our students

educational opportunities, and taxpayers millions of dollars.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Bramble Elementary School

Teacher Mentor & Mentee Handbook

Revised 2019

Our Mission: The mission of Bramble Elementary School is to prepare students to reach their full potential as educated, productive, and responsible citizens.

Students learn in different ways; therefore, curriculum, instructional practices, and assessments should be provided in a variety of ways.

Students need to demonstrate their understanding of state standards and district learning targets as well as being actively involved in solving problems and producing quality work.

Students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process.

Our Vision: The vision of Bramble Elementary School is to create a positive, safe, and respectful school climate that supports an actively engaged learning community for all.

School Wide BES Expectations:
Be Responsible.
Eager to Learn.
Show Respect

Overview of the Mentor Program
Teaching is a profession that is cooperative and collaborative. It is a complex and demanding profession that requires an individual to gain experience in order to become knowledgeable and effective in their role.

New teachers and teachers transferring into a new school have the additional challenge of becoming familiar with their new school environment and all the systems and practices that make the school culture unique.

For new teachers to be successful, it is imperative that they have a system of support in place in order to guide them through the complex task of navigating curriculum, while working to build personal and professional relationships with staff, parents, and students.

Understanding this unique challenge for new teachers, Bramble has implemented a Mentor Program to help and assist new teachers with their transition into the culture of Bramble and the complex role of an educator. Our hope is that this program will provide a foundation of support that will help to retain and grow effective educators.

Qualities of an Effective Mentor Program
Our goal for the mentor program is to create an opportunity for the mentor and mentee to meet regularly to discuss topics and concerns that directly affect teaching and learning or the mentee's transition to Bramble.
Ideally, the mentor and mentee will cover topics for discussion each month as they conduct bi-weekly meetings. The first meeting each month will specifically address the topics for discussion and additional concerns of the mentor/mentee. While topics are provided, the mentor and mentee will have the freedom to be flexible in the topics chosen for each meeting.

The second meeting will be used to continue topics for discussion and to follow-up on items addressed during the first meeting of the month. The discussion that occurs will allow the mentor and mentee to gauge the progress of "items for action" and allow reflection for the following month's meeting.

A template will be provided to help the mentor and mentee document the topics for discussion and the results of items identified as "items for action".

Roles and Responsibilities of the Mentor Teacher
Mentor Teachers are selected based on their history of being skilled in their role as an educator. They have been identified as teachers who have the skills and knowledge to serve as a Teacher Mentor to new and transferring teachers.

Mentor Teachers have shown a history of being knowledgeable and effective in the areas of instruction, assessment, relationship building, and positive ethics practices. Therefore, we believe that their expertise and guidance is and will be instrumental in helping Trip to retain and grow a quality staff of educators.

An Effective Mentor:
Is regarded by colleagues as an outstanding teacher
Has excellent knowledge of pedagogy and subject matter
Has confidence in his/her own instructional skills
Feels comfortable being observed by other teachers
Maintains a network of professional contacts
Understands the policies and procedures of the school, district, state
Is a meticulous observer of classroom practice
Collaborates well with other teachers and administrators
Is willing to learn from and collaborate with their mentee

Roles and Responsibilities of the Mentor Teacher Include:
Provide Instructional Support. This includes conferencing with the new teacher
Provide Professional Support. Mentors should be a resource for information on evaluation, professional practice, and policies and procedures.
Provide Personal Support. Mentors can help relieve the stress by helping the new teacher to put problems into perspective with support and encouragement.
Maintain a Confidential Relationship. It is important the new teacher be able to discuss problems openly with the mentor, so that they may be addressed in an informed and caring manner.
Ensure a Strong Start to the Year. Mentors can help new teachers launch into a productive year by making sure they know where to obtain all needed materials and ideas for lesson planning & classroom management.
Serve as a Liaison. The mentor should have the knowledge and skills to refer the new teacher to other teachers and educational resources.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Mentee Teacher
A mentee teacher can be a new teacher or a person transferring from another school, district, or state. What makes the mentee unique is their task of becoming acclimated to a new school and its culture. Being a new teacher means becoming familiar with the students, staff, and community that the school services. In addition, the new teacher must adjust to new schedules, practices, policies & procedures. All these things must be accomplished while also juggling the responsibilities of serving students in the classroom setting. While the mentee's task is daunting, with the help and support of the mentor teacher along with the school's administrative team, the mentee's ability to be successful is maximized.

An Effective Mentee Is Encouraged To:
Be present and committed to learning and improving
Listen to others, be open-minded, and be accepting of honest feedback
Identify needs and ask for help
Observe and make request to observe experienced teachers
Offer Reflections on his/her own practices
Participate in Professional Development offered by GCPS
Become knowledgeable of district programs and instructional practices
Become knowledgeable of the AKS (Academic Knowledge and Skills) for each subject area
Be willing to research
Become familiar with the Teacher Duties and Responsibilities & Teacher Evaluation Criteria
Maintain Confidentiality: All discussions between mentor and mentee will remain private and confidential

Name: _____
Indicate your degree of need for assistance in the following areas by circling the response that best indicates your need level. Use the following scale in responding to each item.

LN   **SN**   **MN**   **HN**
                            VHN
Low Need   Some Need   Moderate Need   High Need
                      Very

1, Finding and understanding curriculum guidelines and materials	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
2. Obtaining instructional resources and materials	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
3. Planning for instruction	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
4. Classroom organization and management	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
5. Management for student behavior	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
6. Effective instructional techniques	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
7. Monitoring and evaluating student performance	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
8. Dealing with individual student needs and abilities	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
9. Understanding the expectations of the principal and administrative team	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
10. Understanding how to collaborate with support staff (ESOL, Coaches, etc.)	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
11. Effective communication with parents	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
12. Interpreting district policies, rules, and expectations	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
13. Planning and managing my time and work	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
14. Communicating with other staff (teachers, secretaries, custodians, etc.)	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
15. Professional growth opportunities	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN
16. Understanding the teacher evaluation process	LN	SN	MN	HN	VHN

Entry Year Needs Assessment (Continued)

(Optional)

Number of Teaching Years: _____   Elementary: _____   Middle: _____
          Middle _____   Other (Specify):_____

List other areas in which you may want assistance or feedback.

Describe your single greatest concern as a new teacher. Try to write at least three or four
sentences which detail the concern.

Extra Tidbits: (Optional)

Birth Month & Date: _____

Hometown: _____

Hobbies: _____

Other Interesting Info:

_____

<u>Monthly Meeting Discussion Template</u>

The mentor and the mentee should agree upon a mutually convenient time to meet and make attendance for the meeting a high priority. During each meeting, it is suggested that the mentor and mentee make use of the "Monthly Topics for Discussion" sheet as well as the "Monthly Meeting Discussion Template". The discussion template will serve as a tool for documenting topics discussed and actions taken as a result of the discussions held.

Meeting Notes for the Month of: _____

First Meeting	Second Meeting
Date:	Date:
Time:	Time:
Topics:	Topics:
Materials Used:	Materials Used:
Persons Invited:	Persons Invited:

Monthly Meeting Discussion Template (Page 2)

Key Points of Discussion:

Items for Action (Items to Be Implemented or Identified for Follow-Up):

Additional Information:

Monthly Topics for Discussion

July/August
Introductions – Introduce Staff Members
Staff handbook
Facility – Tour of the School & Location of Materials
Room Arrangement – Organization of materials and supplies. Small group and large group areas
Procedures – Daily schedule, homework, discipline (referrals), emergency plans, and emergency red bag
Technology – Lotus Notes/ Email, Collaboration Tool, Parent Portal, attendance, Eclass course page and grades (PinPoint)
Grading policies
Management –Establishing expectations, class rules and procedures, and transitions
Lesson Planning and AKS (Curriculum map and calendars)
Parent Communications
Curriculum Night
Norms and Expectations for the classroom (workshop models, small group instruction, and instructional artifacts)
Select good times to meet on a regular basis
Discuss/Model how to conduct a Fountas and Pinnell Assessment

September

Model and discuss a guided reading lesson
Setting Up a Sub Folder
Grading- The importance of feedback, report cards, progress reports
Conference Reports/Continuums & Conferring with parents/guardians
Reading and Writing Strategies
Teacher Evaluation Process
Academic Contract and ELPPS plan
Formative and Summative Assessments
Conduct shared scoring of writing using GCPS writing rubrics
Maintain an "Open Door Policy"

October
First nine weeks progress reports
SST Referral Process (RTI/Patriot Chats)

Debrief parent/teacher conferences
First Nine Weeks DDA Assessments

November
Revisit Academic Contracts
Midterm Progress Reports
Revisit Curriculum Calendars
Snow Day/Cyber Day expectations
Develop plan/strategies for teaching based on DDA results
Fountas & Pinnell testing completed before winter break

December
Revisit Best Practices for Instruction
Share Successes/Opportunities for growth for 2nd semester
1st semester awards

January
Revisit classroom expectations
Winter Conferring
Update Reading and Writing Continuums to have ready for conferences

February
Conferring (2nd Parent/Teacher Conference)
Midterm Progress Reports
Update Academic Contracts/ELPPs

March
Third Nine Weeks Progress Reports
Testing Concerns/Questions
Testing strategies
Testing – Review Calendar/Schedules

April
Gift of Time due to testing

May
End of the Year Inventory
Fourth nine weeks progress report
Preparing class lists (pink/blue cards)
End of the Year Checklist
End of the year data on shared drive
Finalize continuums, ELLPs, and Academic contracts
RBES Results & Conclusions
2nd semester/EOY award ceremony
Celebrate, Celebrate, Celebrate!

Appendix B

Dear Bramble Mentor/Mentee,

     I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about the experiences of mentees and mentors in a diverse elementary school setting. You are eligible to be in this study because you are a teacher mentor or mentee this year. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be virtually interviewed twice which both will range from about 45 minutes to one-hour. I may also ask you to provide artifacts, such as your lesson plans, that may demonstrate your experience. The interviews will be audio-recorded. The information you provide will be used in writing my dissertation with the hope that what you share will be used to help make improvements to the mentorship program at both our school, but other schools. Your identity and participation in the study, if you chose to participate, will be kept completely confidential. Please remember this is <u>completely voluntary</u>. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you would like to participate please fill out the attached google form with your name, grade, and years' experience by **May 6**. I will notify eligible participants by **May 8.** If you have further questions about the study, please feel free to contact me!

Thank you,

Danielle Floody

Appendix C

Georgia State University
Informed Consent

Title: TEACHER STORIES OF PARTICIPATION IN A DIVERSE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
MENTORSHIP PROGRAM: PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL, CULTURAL PROFICIENCY, and
PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE

Principal Investigator: Dr. Caroline C. Sullivan
Student Principal Investigator: Danielle Corrine Floody

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of mentees and mentors in a diverse
elementary school setting. You are invited to take part in this research study because you are
currently either a mentor or a mentee in a mentoring program at a Title I school. A total of six
people will be invited to take part in this study: three mentors and three mentees.

Procedures
If you decide to take part, you will be interviewed by the Student PI two times.
Each activity will be approximately 45-60 minutes.
The interviews will be audio recorded.
Interviews will take place in person by the student PI that is convenient for you.
The student PI will collect documents from the mentor meetings.
The study will span 4-6 weeks.
You will have the opportunity throughout the study to review the data collected to provide
feedback.
Participation in the entire study will take approximately 140-200 minutes of your time.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal
You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you
have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time.
You may refuse to take part in the study or stop at any time; this will not cause you to lose any
benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Contact Information
If you have questions about the study, concerns or complaints about the study, please contact
Caroline C. Sullivan at ccsullivan@gsu.edu and Danielle Corrine Floody at
ddickey1@student.gsu.edu

Consent
If you agree to participant in the study, you may provide consent while recording.

Appendix D

Interview One Protocol Mentees

Introductory Questions

1. Tell me about your teaching background…

2. Why did you choose to become a teacher? (Human/Moral)

3. Tell me about your most memorable experience with teacher mentorship…

4. Reflecting on your experiences, what is/was your biggest challenges with mentorship?

Procedural

5. What are some of the logistical things that you learned from your mentor (either formal or informal mentor)?

Human

6. How has your mentor experience influenced your classroom teaching practices?

7. What are your professional goals as a teacher?

8. Do you have other goals for yourself as an educator?

9. What role does/might your mentor (either formal or informal) play in developing and supporting your professional goals?

Appendix E

Interview Two Protocol Mentees

Social

1. Tell me about a time when you and your mentor collaborate on professional tasks.

2. In what ways has your mentor included you as a member of the school faculty, or the

   teaching profession overall?

Decisional

3. Tell me about some of the dilemmas you have encountered in teaching – how has your
   mentor relationship supported (not supported) your thinking/actions in the classroom?

   In what ways has your mentor facilitated your use of evidence and experience to make
   decisions in the classroom?

Cultural

4. Tell me about your experiences teaching students with cultural backgrounds other than your

   own…

5. How does your own cultural background influence your instructional decisions when
   teaching diverse students? Can you provide an example?

6. How do your teaching practices inside your classroom support your diverse students'
   learning?

7. What type of support from a mentor do you need to teach in a diverse classroom?

8. What else would you want from a mentorship program to support your growth as an

   educator?

Institutional

1. How does your work with supporting culture in your classroom facilitate an overall school
   climate of culturally responsive practices?

Appendix F

Interview One Protocol Mentors

Introductory Questions

1. Tell me about your teaching background…
2. Why did you choose to become a teacher? (Human/Moral)
3. Tell me about your most memorable experience with teacher mentorship…

4. Reflecting on your experiences, what is/was your biggest challenges with mentorship?

Procedural
5. What are some of the logistical things that you tell your mentee (either formal or informal)?

Human

6. How has your mentor experience influenced your classroom teaching practices?

7. What are your professional goals as a teacher?
8. Do you have other goals for yourself as an educator?

9. What role does/might as a mentor (either informal or formal) play in developing your

professional goals?

Appendix G

Interview Two Protocol Mentors

Social

1.Tell me about a time when you and your mentee collaborated on professional tasks.

2. In what was have you included your mentee as a member of the school faculty, or the

teaching professional over?

Decisional

3. Tell me about some of dilemmas you have encountered in teaching – how has your thinking/actions supported (not supported) your mentee?

In what ways have you used your mentee's experience to make decisions in the classroom?

Cultural

4. Tell me about your experiences teaching students with cultural backgrounds other than your own…

5. How does your own cultural background influence your instructional decisions when teaching diverse students? Can you provide an example?

6. What type of support from a mentor program would you need to teach in a diverse classroom?

7. What else would you want from a mentorship program to support your growth as an educator?

Institutional

8. How does your work with supporting culture in your classroom facilitate an overall

school climate of culturally responsive practices?