Summer 2017

Novice Educator Perceptions of the Influences of A New Teacher Mentoring Program in A Hard to Staff School

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NOVICE EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS
OF THE INFLUENCES OF A NEW TEACHER MENTORING PROGRAM
IN A HARD TO STAFF SCHOOL

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
Jennifer Lee Vaughan
August 2017
NOVICE EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS
OF THE INFLUENCES OF A NEW TEACHER MENTORING PROGRAM
IN A HARD TO STAFF SCHOOL

By

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Dedication

For Brian.

Thank you for bearing all things, believing all things,
hoping all things, and enduring all things.
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“We rise by lifting others.”

-Robert Ingersol

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Abstract

Supporting and retaining new teachers is an ever-growing challenge faced by school districts across the nation (Anhorn, 2008; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles, 1988; Lorti, 1975). One way that many schools approach this opportunity to support new teachers is through teacher mentoring programs (Goldrick, 2016; Gray & Gray, 1985; Moody, 2009; Strong & Baron, 2004). As school leaders implement mentoring programs, it is important to know whether the programs are meeting their stated goals (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). The purpose of this program evaluation was to look at the perceived influence of a teacher mentoring program upon novice educators within a single hard-to-staff school in an urban neighborhood within a school district in Virginia. Specifically, 10 novice educators were interviewed regarding the influence of the various components and activities of a mentoring program upon their teacher self-efficacy as well as upon their plans for continuing to teach within that school. Interview data revealed teachers felt supported by mentors but the changes in practice and in their own self-efficacy occurred when they observed peers who successfully managed classroom discipline or when they applied strategies learned through induction programs. Interviews also revealed that a mentoring program had little impact upon new teachers’ decisions to remain at a particular school or in a specific school district. Recommendations include ensuring that all new educators—including late hires—receive a mentor, strongly recommending opportunities for peer observations, targeting hard to staff school mentors with coaching and additional training, and providing earlier and more varieties of training opportunities for new teachers in classroom management.
NOVICE EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS

OF THE INFLUENCES OF A NEW TEACHER MENTORING PROGRAM

IN A HARD TO STAFF SCHOOL
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Every year new teachers eagerly begin their careers hopeful in the anticipation of the positive impact they will have upon the academic life of students. And every year many of these same teachers end up describing their first year in the classroom with words like struggle, frustration, insecurity, self-doubt, failure, disillusionment, and even humiliation (Anhorn, 2008; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; McCann & Johannessen, 2004). This state of affairs among novice educators presents an opportunity and challenge for school leaders as they seek ways to effectively induct these new teachers into the profession as well as adequately support and retain them. School leaders across the nation are seeking ways to build teacher self-efficacy and resilience among novice educators while at the same time improving teacher practice and advancing student learning (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Driscoll, 2008; Sun, 2012).

Supporting and keeping qualified, fully licensed teachers in the profession is not a recent challenge nor is it specific to any single school district. The teaching profession is one that has long been characterized by high levels of attrition (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Lorti, 1975). Increasing demands of high stakes testing programs place many schools at risk for losing teachers (United States Department of Education, 2005). Very often novice
educators find themselves in situations where they experience a sense of isolation (Anhorn, 2008; Lieberman et al., 1998; Lorti, 1975). The result of these difficult situations is that many new teachers simply decide to leave the profession. Between 40 to 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of their career (Ingersoll, 2012; Kopkowaki, 2008).

Not only are new teachers leaving the profession earlier than in previous generations, but fewer students are entering teacher preparation programs so that the jobs vacated by new teachers are becoming harder to fill. Sawchuck (2014) reports,

Massive changes to the profession, coupled with budget woes, appear to be shaking the image of teaching as a stable, engaging career. Nationwide, enrollments in university teacher-preparation programs have fallen by about 10% from 2004 to 2012, according to federal estimates from the U.S. Department of Education’s postsecondary data collection,” (para. 5).

Lower rates of teacher retention and a growing scarcity of new teachers coming out of college have costly implications for school districts attempting to hire new teachers. As reported by one model estimating the financial impact of teacher turnover, the average cost to replace teachers in the United States is $14,509 (Synar & Maiden, 2012). Nationwide, these costs are vast. A report from the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) attributes teacher turnover costs as high as $2.2 billion each year.

Although the Virginia Department of Education does not currently track teacher retention rates, anecdotal evidence suggests teacher turnover rates in Virginia are on the rise. Recent Virginia newspapers report Richmond’s turnover rate in 2015 was 13.3%
while Chesterfield’s has seen a rise from 7.3% to 9.8% from 2012 to 2015 (Oliver, 2015). This points, at least anecdotally, to a need to look for means of supporting and retaining teachers.

In the Alton School District (a pseudonym), a suburban school district in Virginia, rates of retention have been dropping annually for the past five years as evidenced in Table 1. For purposes of anonymity, all names of schools and individuals interviewed for this program evaluation have been changed to pseudonyms.

Table 1

Alton School District Teacher Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of Teachers Lost</th>
<th>Number of Teachers Retained</th>
<th>% Retained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SY 2011-12</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>4865</td>
<td>93.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SY 2013-14</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>4980</td>
<td>92.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SY 2014-15</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>4952</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SY 2015-16</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>4958</td>
<td>91.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SY 2016-17</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>5025</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SY=School Year. Data from J. Current, personal communication, March 28, 2017

One way that many schools attempt to meet the challenge of supporting and retaining new teachers is to institute mentoring programs for novice educators. Today, 29 states require some sort of support for new teachers (Goldrick, 2016). Mentoring is a time-honored approach of conveying the knowledge, skills, and abilities from an established professional to a new member of the discipline (Gray & Gray, 1985; Moody, 2009; Strong & Baron, 2004). In a public school setting, it is often a structured, formal way for senior, experienced staff to share from their experience and understanding with protégé or novice staff. The guiding principle of a typical mentoring program is that experienced teachers can work with novice teachers, helping them to navigate the terrain
of the frequently challenging landscape of American public schools. The hope is that with assistance from mentoring senior, more experienced staff, new teachers will make connections, experience successful and satisfying first years of service, and will then be on much more stable footing with increased self-efficacy to launch long-lived teaching careers. Alton School District has such a mentoring program.

The focus of this program evaluation is to evaluate the existing mentor program within Alton School District and to provide school leaders with an understanding of how novice educators perceive the support they are receiving through this program. Specifically, this study will interview novice educators who are nearing completion of their first year of employment within a single hard-to-staff school, Mossland Middle School (MMS), located within an urban neighborhood in the Alton School District. Interviews will explore new teachers’ impressions of support they have received through Alton’s new teacher mentoring program. New teachers will also be asked questions that explore the influences of mentoring program activities upon their teacher self-efficacy as well as upon their plans for remaining in the school where they currently work.

Program Description

The Alton School District mentoring program is in place throughout all schools across the district and is managed through the School District’s Office of Professional Learning. All teachers who are newly hired by Alton are enrolled in a new teacher mentoring and induction program. Mentoring and induction, according to the School District Office of Professional Learning web page (n. d.), “is the process of acculturating newly hired educators to the beliefs, values, practices, and culture of the School District.” The mentoring program in this district is over seven years old. Novice educators take part
in a year long, systematic orientation and professional learning program that includes a) two days of orientation one organized and run centrally that is an orientation to the School District and one organized at the teacher’s local school that is an orientation to the specific school; b) school based assigned one-on-one mentoring; c) a second day of centrally-organized orientation conducted on a teachers’ work day in October, d) peer observations and e) ongoing professional learning The program includes a complex network of lead mentors and mentors who are trained in basic mentoring. Specifically, they are trained to conduct coaching, consulting, and collaborative conversations with their novice educators with the goal of improving teacher self-efficacy and thereby advancing student learning. One additional influence upon new teachers is the opportunities they have to participate in the many professional development opportunities that exist and are offered outside of the formal mentoring program.

Program Context

Alton School District is home to 95 schools, employs over 5,500 teachers and provides an education for over 85,000 students (“Profile of Excellence: 2015-16,” n. d.). Alton is ethnically, racially, and economically diverse. Half of its schools are located in the more urban portion of the district where many of the schools are marked by high rates of poverty, struggling schools, and high rates of teacher turnover. The other half of the district is suburban and even rural in some areas, has lower rates of poverty, high performing schools, and relatively low rates of teacher turnover.

United States Census Reports (n. d.) describe the region where Alton School District is located as part of Northern Virginia within the greater Washington D. C., Virginia, Maryland, and West Virginia geographical region. Another report identifies the
county home of School District as being the first majority-minority county in Virginia with Hispanic (of any race, mostly from Central and South America), African American, and Asian being the chief groups (Shear, 2012). The School District’s Profiles of Excellence report lists the demographic make-up of the district’s students as represented in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographic Makeup of Alton School District Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>% of all School District Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>32.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino of any race</td>
<td>32.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>20.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>8.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>6.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)</td>
<td>21.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>11.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>37.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Adapted from “Profiles in Excellence: 2015-16.”*

**Hard to staff schools.** In the 2004 Education Commission of the States, Glennie, Coble, and Allen (2004) identified hard-to-staff schools as those which largely reside in urban areas, have, as the term suggests, relatively high turnovers in staff, a high percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches and are ethnic minorities, and tend to have higher percentages of students who are performing below grade-level at end-of-year tests. Among the School District’s 95 schools, 23 may be classified as hard-to-staff (Current, personal communication, May 17, 2016). School District human resources data reveal that among these hard-to-staff schools, nearly all have hired between 7 and 15 novice educators each year over the past four years.
(Current, personal communication, May 17, 2016). And although new teachers come to these hard-to-staff schools every year, human resources staff report they frequently migrate to other, less urban areas of the School District when openings become available (Current, personal communication, May 17, 2016).

The school of focus within this program evaluation, MMS is one of these hard-to-staff schools. MMS serves a population where 50% of the students are economically disadvantaged and 20% of the students are speakers of languages other than English. Staff turnover has been ranging between 20% to 24% per year for the past four years. Despite these challenges, the school has managed to receive the distinction of State’s Schools to Watch and School District School of Excellence awards for academic excellence for seven of the past 10 years (Profiles in excellence, 2016). This dual condition of a high turnover of staff and other attributes of hard-to-staff schools along with its consistently high record for academic achievement makes this school an interesting candidate for program evaluation case study. Demographic information for MMS is represented in Table 3.
Table 3

**Demographic Makeup MMS Students 2015-16**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>% of all MMS Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino of any race</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from “2015-16 School Profile.”

**Program Description**

Mentoring programs in schools play an important role in helping novice educators make the transition from an academic understanding of instruction, as learned in their teacher preparation programs to becoming self-efficacious; capable of handling anything that comes their way in the classroom. The Alton School District has embraced a mentoring program that attempts to build self-efficacy within its newest teachers through a complex and multi-layered mentoring program.

**Mentoring within the school district strategic plan.** Alton School District’s mentoring program lives within the purview of the Office of Professional Learning. The District’s mentoring program is addressed in the 2016-20 Strategic plan through the following statement:
Objective 4.2: Develop and support high performing employees through an employee supervision and evaluation system that provides targeted and ongoing professional development.

4.2.2 Each year, all first-year teachers will be supported by a mentoring program for their first three years, including being provided with trained mentors, preferably matched to their endorsement area. (Strategic Plan 2016-20, n. d.).

Origins of the school district mentoring program. In Virginia, since 1985, a variety of programs have been implemented to support beginning teachers (Virginia Department of Education, 2000). In its published Guidelines for mentor teacher programs for beginning and experienced teachers (2000), the Virginia Department of Education lists multiple iterations of beginning teacher support programs starting with the 1985 Beginning Teacher Assistance Program which evolved into a performance assessment required for licensure; later rescinded by the Virginia General Assembly, through the Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement act of 1999 which required a trained mentor for every beginning teacher in the Commonwealth. The following year, according to this report, the Virginia General Assembly adopted guidelines for essential components of a mentor program along with funding for state-wide implementation.

Within the Alton School District there were several generations of new teacher support programs leading to a pilot of its current mentoring program. The current new teacher mentoring program is a collaborative program that seeks to develop a professional culture of collaboration and shared responsibility and establish a school community that supports professional learning (School District Apple Federal Credit
Union presentation, 2010). A conversation with a School District supervisor who previously co-managed the School District mentor program revealed that, “The School District has always had a mentoring program. But it has only been within the past seven years that the mentoring program has included a formal training program and mentoring log for all mentors” (M. Nelson, personal communication, March 12, 2015). The current mentor program was developed in collaboration with stakeholders and in consultation with staff from the New Teacher Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

**Mental program components.** According to the School District’s *Mentoring Handbook* (2012),

its mentor and induction program has been custom-designed to meet the needs of educators in the School District, as well as the induction standards set forth by the New Teacher Center. Drawing from research on mentoring, induction, and effective professional learning, the practices of the New Teacher Center, and feedback from District stakeholders, best practices have been aligned with the vision and culture of our School District and the Standards and Guidelines provided by the Commonwealth of Virginia (p. 9).

The School District’s mentor program consists of a collaborative model with three days of new teacher orientation provided both centrally and at the teacher’s school as well as ongoing professional development that takes place at the school. Every novice educator is assigned a mentor who has been trained within the School District’s mentor institute. Each school has a lead mentor who takes responsibility for providing beginning educators with the front line and most direct support (Mentoring Handbook, 2012).
The handbook (2012) goes on to describe the activities that each novice educator may engage in during the course of the first year of teaching. It is the influence of these mentoring program activities upon new teachers’ self-efficacy that will be assessed as part of this program evaluation. The new teacher mentoring program activities include:

a.) A district-wide new teacher orientation offered on the first day for new teachers as well as a second professional-development day offered in mid-October.

b.) A school based new teacher orientation which is offered on new teachers’ second day within their base schools.

c.) Ongoing weekly support from trained mentors in the form of coaching conversations which are documented through logs.

d.) Mentor-led classroom observations with follow-up coaching conversations.

e.) Monthly school based induction meetings coordinated by base-school lead mentors.

f.) District-wide content-based induction trainings offered quarterly or bi-annually depending upon the level of instruction. Elementary teachers have quarterly sessions while secondary instructors are invited to bi-annual sessions.

The School District’s mentoring program presents within its manual specific guidelines for running a school based mentor program. All guidelines are printed in the School District’s *Mentoring Handbook* (2012) which is distributed to all mentors, lead mentors, and building administrators. Lead mentors meet quarterly for training and
ongoing support. A suggested curriculum for ongoing base-school support of novice is provided for all lead mentors.

Overview of the Evaluation Approach

The purpose of this program evaluation is to identify the perceptions of novice educators within a single hard-to-staff school of the Alton School District’s new teacher mentoring program and its influences upon their teacher self-efficacy. Additionally, the evaluation will identify the influences that shape these novice educators’ plans for continuing to teach in the schools where they were initially hired.

Program Evaluation Model

Program evaluations are an essential tool in assessing the effectiveness of any program (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Mertens & Wilson, 2012). This program evaluation seeks to look at the effectiveness of the Alton School District’s mentoring program by consulting with the program’s primary constituents; the novice educators who are served by the program. For purposes of this program evaluation, the evaluator will look at the intended program outcomes of teacher self-efficacy and teacher retention from the point of view of the novice educators. In an attempt to assess identified program outcomes, a logic model depicting program inputs, activities, short term outcomes, and long-term outcomes has been used. Logic models are used to help evaluators identify relationships among program components and intended outcomes as a means of evaluating whether the program is meeting these outcomes (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The logic model used for this program evaluation may be found in Appendix A.
**Purpose of the evaluation.** School District stakeholders want to assess whether the new teacher mentoring program is working to meet the needs of novice educators. Their motivation is simple. If the program is not working to accomplish its intended outcomes, the program must be adjusted to meet the needs of its novice educators. Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) note that programs not producing expected results should be changed or eliminated.

**Focus of the evaluation.** This program evaluation will look at the perceived influence of the mentoring program upon novice educators within the program. Specifically, novice educators in a particular hard-to-staff middle school will be interviewed regarding the influence of the various components and activities of the mentoring program as identified in the logic model in Appendix A as well as their perceptions of program influences upon their teacher efficacy and retention.

**Evaluation questions.** The questions that drive this program evaluation case study are:

1. What are the perceptions of novice educators in a hard-to-staff middle school regarding the ways their experiences with the new teacher mentor program influenced their teacher self-efficacy?
2. What influences do novice educators in a hard-to-staff middle school report shaping their plans to remain teaching in their current school as well as continue to remain in the teaching profession?

**Significance of the Study**

As the Alton School District continues to grow in size and number of schools while the national and local teacher supply continues to diminish, school leaders are
seeking ways to become more effective in meeting the needs of the growing number of novice educators that come to the school district each year. While numbers of new teachers in the School District grow each year, the numbers of staff that support the new teacher mentoring program remain constant; placing an increasing strain upon training budgets and staffing hours. District-wide leaders are looking for ways to most efficiently meet the needs of more and more new teachers.

While it is important for school leaders to devote their best thinking to solving the problem of supporting growing numbers of new teachers, it is also imperative to ask the constituents—the new teachers—their impressions of ways the existing mentoring program is meeting their needs. Once school leaders have a better understanding of how the existing activities within the mentoring program are meeting the needs of novice educators, they can make more informed decisions regarding ways to best support the new teachers that come to the school district each year.

Definitions of Terms

For purposes of this study, the following terms have been defined to explain their specific use in the context of this study.

**Hard to staff schools** are those schools which largely reside in urban areas, have a high percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches and are ethnic minorities, and tend to have higher percentages of students who are performing below grade-level at end-of-year tests. As the term implies, these schools have a higher than usual challenge for retaining experienced teachers.

**Induction** For purposes of this study, induction refers to the support and guidance provided to novice teachers in the early stages of their careers. Induction
encompasses orientation to the workplace as well as socialization, mentoring, and guidance through the beginning years of teacher practice.

**Mentee** For purposes of this study, mentees are first year teachers with no previous teaching experience. In this study the terms protégé and novice teacher may be used interchangeably for this term.

**Mentor** For purposes of this program, a mentor is an established professional who conveys knowledge, skills, and abilities to a new member of the discipline (Moody, 2009)

**Mentoring** is a time-honored approach of conveying the knowledge, skills, and abilities from an established professional to a new member of the discipline (Moody, 2009)

**Novice Educator** For purposes of this program, a novice is a teacher with less than one year of teaching experience. In this study the terms protégé and mentee may be used interchangeably for this term.

**Protégé** For purposes of this program, a protégé is a teacher with less than one year of teaching experience. In this study the terms novice teacher and mentee may be used interchangeably for this term.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, I discuss the struggles and predicament of new teachers and how that influences teacher retention. Next is a review of the literature on new teacher mentor and induction programs. And finally, there is a review of the literature on teacher self-efficacy.

New teachers are important to the growth and livelihood of schools. They bring with them the optimism and idealism of a desire to help children learn. Effective teaching has been identified as the number one factor that influences student achievement after taking into consideration student personal characteristics (Sun, 2012). In multiple meta-analyses of the strategies that most impact student learning, John Hattie’s (2012) work presents a clear emphasis upon feedback from teachers, quality of instruction, and direct instruction as the top three most effective strategies that fall under the control of public education (p. 190). These are positive influences upon student learning that are possible when a classroom teacher is effective. The positive impact that quality teaching has upon student achievement is indisputable.

**New Teacher Struggle**

Despite the eager optimism that often accompanies the launch of their careers, new teachers walk into a profession that typically greets them with difficult work
assignments, unclear expectations, and very often inadequate resources (Anhorn, 2008; Danielson, 1996). Despite their inexperience, novice educators are required to enter their teaching careers as full participants; performing the same tasks and meeting the same expectations as their veteran colleagues. Novice educators are expected to participate in a professional community where they are evaluated upon their demonstrated pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, effective teaching skills, professionalism, communication skills, and leadership of student academic growth (Danielson, 1996; Hobson, 2009; Jones & Youngs, 2012). And frequently, novice educators find themselves in situations where they experience a sense of isolation (Anhorn, 2008; Lieberman et al., 1988; Lorti, 1975). Despite an initial sense of career optimism, the first year can be difficult presenting new teachers with a sense of struggle. And when new teachers struggle, their students suffer (Goldrick, 2016).

**The predicament of new teachers.** New teachers are, “on average, less effective than more experienced ones” (Hanushek as cited in Goldrick, 2016, p. i). Ingersoll and Strong’s (2011) comprehensive review of research on induction posits that, “teaching is complex work. Preemployment teacher preparation is rarely sufficient to provide all of the knowledge and skill necessary to successful teaching, and a significant portion can be acquired only while on the job” (pp. 202-203). Preservice preparation alone is insufficient in preparing new teachers for effectiveness in the profession (Lieberman et al., 1988). New teachers begin their careers with limited classroom experience. This limited experience significantly impacts their teaching effectiveness.

Learning to teach successfully can only be done while actually engaging in the authentic tasks of teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987). Schon (as cited in
Schwille, 2008, p. 141) refers to this as a learning predicament when what is to be learned can only be done by doing the task of the profession. In order to effectively learn all the complexities of teaching, novice educators must participate in essential teaching tasks, as opposed to pseudo teaching situations such as those available through student teaching or preservice programs (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987). And in order for educational and pedagogical theory to be effectively transferred into the practical application of a classroom setting so that new teachers can then learn and master the skills of their profession, that this learning must take place under the guidance of an expert (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989).

Learning to teach requires involvement in and an understanding of the intellectual nature of teaching. Mentoring is a powerful method of supporting this kind of learning to teach (Achinstein & Athanases 2006; Blank & Kershaw, 2009; Danielson, 1996; Feiman-Nemser, Carver, Schwille, & Yusko, 1999). A mentor’s role is to help a new teacher transfer their theoretical understanding of what should be done in a classroom, learned in pre-service teacher training programs, to the self-efficacious demonstrated skills of a professional educator.

**Teacher retention and migration.** Given the struggle faced by novice educators, high rates of teacher attrition should not be surprising. Typically, teacher attrition is defined as teachers leaving the field of education (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Liu & Meyer, 2005). High rates of teacher attrition are not only costly to schools, they are inarguably costly to the nation with teacher turnover costs mounting in the billions of dollars (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Lorti, 1975; Sawchuk, 2014; Synar & Maiden, 2012).
But equally consequential are high rates of teacher migration. Migration happens when teachers leave one school to move to another for perceived improved working conditions, wages, socio-economic status of students, or other benefits (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Liu & Meyer, 2005). A study of the cost of turnover in five school districts conducted by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (Barnes et al., 2007) revealed that as many as 50% of teachers leave their first teaching assignments for a more appealing position within their first five years. Migration of experienced teachers away from challenging schools means that the most difficult teaching assignments fall to the least experienced teachers which perpetuates the plight of the new teacher; pointing to an even more pressing need to support the development of new teacher self-efficacy through new teacher mentoring and induction programs.

**Teacher Self-Efficacy**

In a seminal exploration of human performance, Bandura (1977) introduced the concept of self-efficacy beliefs as an assessment of one's capabilities to reach a targeted level of performance in any given endeavor. This idea that what people believe about their own ability to be successful influences their motivation and achievement is an important consideration in teacher induction and training. It is that “can-do” attitude that fosters resiliency and is the element missing when teachers feel a loss of control and empowerment. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) wrote, “teachers’ self-efficacy is a little idea with big impact. Teachers’ judgment of their capability to impact student outcomes has been consistently related to teacher behavior, student attitudes, and student achievement” (p. 954). In schools, improving teacher self-efficacy is one of the means of
improving teacher performance. As teachers’ beliefs in their abilities improve along with their actual level of skills and use of best practices, their impact upon classroom instruction will improve.

Teacher self-efficacy is a self-referent construct; it relies upon the teacher’s assessment of his or her own level of efficacy. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) report, “It is important to note that self-efficacy is a motivational construct based on self-perception of competence rather than actual level of competence” (p. 946). Self-efficacy is self-referent and reliant upon self-perception yet it can be traced and more tangibly understood when considered with its likely sources.

Bandura (1977) proposed that self-efficacy beliefs are developed as individuals interpret information from four sources (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; Usher & Pajares, 2009). The first source is an individual’s experience of mastery experiences that serve as markers of capability. When an individual successfully accomplishes a task, that individual experiences a sense of mastery with an expectation that the same task will be completed successfully in the future. Conversely, if the task is not completed with proficiency, the expectation for future success is much lower (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Usher & Pajares, 2009).

The second source of self-efficacy is an individual’s response to vicarious experiences. As humans observe other humans they develop self-efficacy for a specific task, which can lead to persistence, effort, and ultimately task execution (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). There is, however, one caveat. The extent that the observer identifies with the observed plays a significant role in the effect upon the observer’s self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). For example, if the observer deems the
observed to be a far superior practitioner, the observers may feel inspired but their own sense of self-efficacy may be unchanged or even fall while if the observer perceives him or herself to have surpassed the skills observed in the other, his or her self-efficacy may increase. Moreover, the self-efficacy of a novice may be enhanced if he or she observes a model who initially struggles but eventually overcomes a challenge. Programs of novice educator peer observations should consider the choice of models with these ideas in mind. Choices of peers to observe should include those teachers with slightly more skill so the self-efficacy of the observing teacher might not be diminished as it might when observing a seasoned teacher with a high degree of skill.

A third source of self-efficacy comes through verbal persuasions or the voiced support of a trusted colleague or a mentor (Bandura, 1977; Usher & Pajares, 2009). Mentors trained in coaching conversations can provide this sort of voiced support, which can increase teacher self-efficacy. Bandura noted that although verbal encouragement from an important other may not result in a lasting increase in self-efficacy, it may well provide enough of a boost to get the novice to attempt the skill in order to gather mastery experiences.

Affective or intense psychological states of arousal such as anxiety, stress, fatigue, or other mood states are a fourth source of teacher self-efficacy as proposed by Bandura (1997). The way a novice educator manages an emotional response to a situational prompt can add to a teacher’s feelings of mastery or incompetence (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Interview questions that explore novice educators’ perceptions and responses to mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, voiced support, and resolution of emotional
responses to stimuli will reveal much about that teacher’s level of self-efficacy. These sources of teacher self-efficacy lay the theoretic foundation for the interviews conducted in this study.

When teachers have improved self-efficacy they are more willing to make changes in their practice; their academic optimism improves and they are more willing to take risks in the classroom resulting in improved student achievement (Beard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2010; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). When a mentor helps a novice educator grow in self-efficacy, that mentor plays a role in positively influencing the academic life of students.

**New Teacher Induction and Mentor Programs**

**Induction.** Ingersoll and Strong (2011) conducted a review of existing research on teacher induction and mentoring programs. Their meta-analysis of 15 studies on the effectiveness of induction programs provided, “empirical support for the claim that induction for beginning teachers and teacher mentoring programs in particular have a positive impact upon teacher effectiveness. Almost all of the studies reviewed showed that beginning teachers who participated in some kind of induction had higher satisfaction, commitment, or retention” (p. 225) as compared to their peers who did not go through induction. Induction programs can make a difference for new teachers in terms of teacher effectiveness as demonstrated through student achievement, improved instructional practice, and new teacher retention (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Goldrick, 2016; Ingersoll, 2012).

The New Teacher Center (n. d.) has developed a set of standards, outlined in Appendix B, to serve as a benchmark by which to assess mentoring and induction
programs. These standards may be used when developing a program to support novice educators. They are the standards that were used to develop the guidelines of the School District’s existing mentor program. The standards look at key aspects of a new teacher induction program. In brief, the standards provide school leaders with such specific guidelines as focusing upon teacher effectiveness and student learning and being a part of a coherent educator development program. The standards point to developing specific induction goals accompanied by clearly articulated and research-sourced rationale. These standards require all program design and implementation to respond to the assessed needs of novice educators, students, and school communities. These induction standards were adapted by the School District’s leadership when the newest iteration of their mentoring and induction program was created in 2012 (Nelson, personal communication, June 5, 2015).

**Mentoring.** One of the most important ways to support novice educators is through mentoring (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). In fact, evidence shows that a key component to most successful new teacher induction programs is the ongoing support provided by mentors (Danielson, 1996; Goldrick, 2016; Huling-Austin, 1989; Odell, 1989; Pogodzinski, 2012; Sun, 2012). In education, mentoring is a multi-dimensional process of building upon content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and effective teaching strategies while applying educational theory in a classroom setting (Lipton & Wellman, 2003). Mentors provide the key to helping new teachers grow into their profession. Mentors are the facilitators of the on-the-job learning that is missing from teacher preparation programs.
Mentoring programs can help new teachers advance student achievement and improve teacher retention. In a controlled study of teacher mentoring programs in New York City, Rockoff (2008) found a, “positive, statistically significant effect on student achievement” relative to the number of hours of mentoring received by new teachers (p. 32). More significant, however were the levels of retention of new teachers who received mentoring compared to their peers who did not (Rockoff, 2008). Ingersoll and Strong’s (2011) review of the research on induction and mentoring programs revealed that high quality induction programs can accelerate novice educators’ assimilation into the profession; helping them feel more effective and more likely to remain within the profession (p. 226).

And yet, as successful as mentoring may be to support new teachers, Paese (1990) wrote it would be unrealistic to think mentoring and induction programs alone can solve all the challenges that affect the retention of teachers. Specifically, “there are many other factors (conditions in the workplace, teacher salaries, status in profession, isolation, limited opportunities for advancement) that may contribute to teachers leaving the profession” (p. 161).

**Growth in practice.** Very often novice educators begin their careers full of confidence and unaware of what they need to learn. This awareness of a need for growth begins to develop when they receive negative feedback from a supervisor, when student outcomes do not meet expectations, or when classroom behavior begins to fall apart. It is at this point that new teachers begin to see the need for support.

Supporting change in teacher beliefs toward becoming more self-efficacious can be a complex process with no clearly established or commonly accepted path (Hall &
Hord, 2006). Guskey (2002) proposed that teachers do not change their attitudes and beliefs until after they implement innovations and subsequently see improvements in student outcomes. Gregoire (2003) found that even when teachers have been taught what to do and have full understanding that a difference in practice would improve student outcomes, they still may not change and develop skills sufficiently to sustain these practices. This challenge to motivate teachers to change their beliefs and practices in a sustainable way lies at the heart of teacher induction and mentoring program.

A mentoring and induction program has many components including, among others, orientation to district and building procedures, peer observations, curriculum instruction, sharing of policies, sharing of instructional best practices, and the sharing of curriculum materials. All of these activities acculturate new teachers to the education profession and to teaching within the School District. A mentor’s role is to companion novice educators as they walk through these mentor program activities. But where mentors can support the most lasting growth within novice educators is through coaching conversations. Caplan and Caplan (1993) look upon mentorship through coaching conversations as a learning process that can be termed successful when teachers experience a change in the fundamental understanding or conceptualization of a problem. The goal, then, of the mentor is to help the teacher grow by addressing one or more of the four areas: (a) a need for enhanced skills, (b) a need for increased knowledge, (c) a need for expanded objectivity, and (d) a need for increased confidence. The work of Gregoire (2003) demonstrated that in order for lasting changes of practice to take place, teachers’ conceptual understanding must change. Knight (2007) pointed to teachers’ identity formation around this conceptual understanding to be the basis for teachers’ resistance to
instructional change. These are the types of changes that are supported through deeply engaging coaching conversations between mentors and novice educators. It is through these change-inducing conversations that novice educators can move from feeling overwhelmed and ineffective toward feelings of self-efficacy.

Mentoring through these coaching conversations is a practice for promoting instructional change that lacks a universal definition (Erchul & Sheridan, 2008). Although various models have emerged, Frank and Kratochwill (as cited in Erchul, 2008) proposed they all follow a tiered problem solving process rooted in conversation. Therefore, prior to examining specific models of coaching, it is important to understand some basics about conversations and conversation models that can serve as springboards for teacher change.

The beliefs held by teachers about their students are predictive of student achievement in schools (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, 2001; Goddard, Goddard, Sook, & Miller, 2015). If the goal is to get teachers to grow and develop their practice so that they can alter their beliefs and conceptual understandings, conversations need to take place to support this growth and change. Penlington (2008) explained that conversational dialogue is a “central activity within many professional learning programmes” and as such deserved to be studied (p. 1304). He also identified the central focus of a dialogue that fosters change as one that promotes contemplation, which will then allow people to make decisions regarding action. This identification of the contemplation seems to be the root of a reflective conversation that takes place between a mentor and a new teacher. It is true that contemplation can take place in a solitary way with internal reflection as might take place through journaling, or it can also exist as an external conversation with others.
Engaging in external dialogue asks individuals to “unearth” and reflect upon personally held beliefs. This act of excavating and looking at one’s beliefs allows individuals to see the difference between one’s beliefs about their actions and their actualized behaviors. Self-observation of this difference, according to Penlington (2008) prompted reflective inquiry, allows for “insight into the various determinants that shape” practice, and creates opportunity for change (p. 1311). This sort of reflective dialogue with the resulting insights is the heart of the mentoring coaching conversation that supports improved self-efficacy and positive changes in practice.

Getting to this point in a mentoring conversation is a worthy and obtainable goal. Assessing how novice educators perceive the influences of these mentoring conversations will reveal valuable information regarding the actual practice and impact of these conversations within a specific setting. It is the sort of information that can instruct school leaders in the specific steps and decision making that can evoke lasting development in instructional practice that will ultimately support improved student achievement while at the same time developing higher levels of teacher self-efficacy among novice educators.

**Training mentors.** If new teacher self-efficacy is to be improved through coaching conversations, it is important that a mentor program focus upon the training of its mentors. Pellicer and Anderson (1995) write of early school mentor programs that the effectiveness of mentoring programs “depends almost entirely on the quality of the mentors” (p. 195). Mentors must be trained with significant skills to ensure the quality of the program (Bryant & Terborg, 2008; Harrison, Lawson, & Wortley, 2005). Goldrick’s (2016) 50 state review of new teacher mentor programs provided a recommendation that
ongoing training, support and strategic use of mentor teachers is critical to instructional focused guidance for beginning educators. Goldrick specifically identified mentor training as a critical need because the, “skills and abilities of an effective mentor are different from those of an effective classroom teacher. These include facilitation of adult learning, classroom observation, and leading reflective coaching conversations” (p. 12). Training mentors involves training them in the ability to facilitate effective, reflective conversations.

In its guidelines for mentor teacher programs across the state of Virginia, the Virginia Department of Education (2000) recommends training mentors in, among other skills, coaching and giving constructive feedback to peers along with enhanced communication skills (p. 14). Schools may work with training programs and coaching models that target this sort of learning-centered conversations.

Although several research-based coaching models have overlapping common themes in terms of focus and intent to support teachers, there are also some distinctive differences. Barkley’s work (2005) takes a behavioral angle as his model asks coaches to look first to the desired student behavior, think about the teaching behavior that is required to bring about that change, and then coach those specific behaviors. Barkley calls this style of coaching backwards planning. Knight (2007), similar to Barkley, also looks to the desired outcomes but terms them as either behavioral, attitudinal, or achievement based. Like Barkley, Knight focuses upon what is necessary to get teachers to bring the desired outcomes out of the students. Next Knight’s model has the coach invite teachers to set their own goals. The role of the coach, then is to facilitate cycle of observing outcomes, providing feedback, and facilitating the setting goals.
Unlike the behaviorally focused models of Barkley and Knight, a second group of coaching models turns its attention to mediating the thinking of the teacher being coached. In these models, the emphasis is upon listening, reflection, paraphrasing, questioning, inquiry, and empathy. Rather than telling teachers what to do, these reflective coaching models use a positive pre-supposition, reflection, and open ended questioning to mediate the thinking of the teacher being coached so that the teacher can bring forth their own best thinking and response to the coached situation. These approaches are not instructional, directive, or advice-giving. They are rooted in the idea that internal motivation is the sort that promotes lasting change (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Deutschman, 2007; Pink, 2009). Costa and Garmston (2002) and the mentor program that emerged from their work with Lipton and Wellman (2003) train coaches and mentors to mediate thinking through a model that works with silence, paraphrases, and carefully posed open ended questions designed to address the varying states of mind of the coachee. The idea is to let the coached teacher take the lead in their cognitive processing in response to mediative questions. Mentors and coaches are trained in paraphrasing and questioning skills.

With Tschannen-Moran and Tschannen-Moran’s (2010) model, the goal is a similarly mediative process however, “the differences emerge through their application of principles gleaned from positive psychology, appreciative inquiry, Nonviolent Communication, social cognitive theory, and design thinking” (p. xxii). The Evocative Coaching model outlines a four-step method that takes a teacher-centered, strengths based approach to mediated thinking and performance improvement.
While many school districts have used each of these models to train mentors with success, the Alton School District has chosen to use a reflective coaching model; training leaders in Cognitive Coaching and opting for the Lipton and Wellman (2003) mentor training program complete with a 15-hour mentor training institute and three-hour refresher courses to train and support mentors in the use of mediative coaching conversations.

**Teacher Retention and Mentoring Programs**

Teacher self-efficacy is not the only goal of many teacher mentor programs. Finding ways to help schools retain new teachers is also a priority of many school district mentoring programs. Wong (2004) said mentoring and induction is defined as, “a process—a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process—that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain new teachers and seamlessly progresses them into a lifelong learning program” (p. 42). Not only is it important for such programs to support the new teachers but also to retain them and help them grow. Published reports by the National Center for Education Statistics’ Schools and Staffing Survey (2010) state that participation in comprehensive induction programs can cut attrition in half. Ingersoll (2012) and Ingersoll & Strong’s (2011) review of mentoring and induction research report successful mentoring programs are those which not only improve teacher effectiveness and teacher self-efficacy but also improve teacher retention. Mentoring programs have the potential to not only help teacher succeed but also improve new teacher retention.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Throughout history, humans have attempted to describe, understand, and assuage the imperfections of systems they have designed and managed. These attempts have been the stuff of great literature, poetry, and religion. These attempts are also the foundation of good program evaluation. Stufflebeam, Madaus, and Kellaghan (2000) trace the roots of program evaluation to the 19th century age of social reform in Great Britain with the emergent endeavors to reform education. Those early attempts were largely informal and impressionistic. It was not until Tyler’s (1975) American eight-year study assessing the outcomes of 15 progressive high schools and 15 traditional high schools that program evaluation came to be systemized in schools, using behavioral terms to state objectives and goals. Today, program evaluations have come to be the gold standard of education reform (Fitzpatrick, Worthen & Sanders, 2004). Evaluations provide the needed information to make the changes and cause reform. Without serious evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented programs, many school systems run the risk of randomly adopting any current fad or pet project in education.

The purpose of this program evaluation is to determine whether the School District’s new teacher mentor program is meeting its expressed goals of improving teacher self-efficacy and teacher retention. Specifically, this evaluation attempts to identify the
perceptions of novice educators in a single hard-to-staff middle school regarding the ways their experiences with the School District’s new teacher mentor program influenced their teacher self-efficacy. Additionally, this program evaluation seeks to identify novice educator’s reported influences in teacher retention and migration in a hard-to-staff school.

In general terms, this program evaluation was conducted through interviewing novice educators who have gone through the mentoring program to determine whether the program’s intended outcomes were actualized in the working lives of the program’s participants.

**Program Evaluation Standards**

To determine the effectiveness of a program evaluation, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation developed 30 evaluation standards, which set the criteria for program evaluation assessment (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). These 30 standards and corresponding descriptions are organized into the four groups that are described in Table 4.
Table 4

*Program Evaluation Standards*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utility Standards</td>
<td>Ensure that an evaluation will serve the information needs of intended users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feasibility Standards</td>
<td>Ensure that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propriety Standards</td>
<td>Ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation as well as those affected by its results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy Standards</td>
<td>Ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth or merit of the program being evaluated.</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Yarbrough, et al., 2011.

The standard by which this program evaluation would be evaluated would be the Utility Standard. Since this program evaluation sets to meet the information needs of the School District’s stakeholders, this evaluation will only be as good as it is useful to the identified needs of the stakeholders (Yarbrough et al., 2011). And indeed, discerning whether the School District’s new teacher mentoring program meets its intended goals is useful information for the stakeholders.

**Rationale For Interviews As Data Sources**

We conduct interviews because we are interested in the stories people have to tell and in what their stories reveal about them. When turning to interview conversations as data sources, the program evaluation enters the worldview of phenomenological case studies; focusing upon what Moustakas (1994) identifies as the, “lived experiences” of individuals. French phenomenological philosopher, Merleau-Ponty (1962), advised observers of human phenomenon that what matters most is to describe the given observed situation as precisely as possible rather than to explain or analyze. In order to capture the perceptions and experiences of novice educators as accurately as possible, face-to-face
interviews were used as the primary data source. This option afforded participants the opportunity to fully explain their perceptions.

Evaluation Questions

The research questions that drive this program evaluation case study are:

1. What are the perceptions of novice educators regarding the ways their experiences with the new teacher mentor program influenced their teacher self-efficacy?
2. What influences do novice educators report shaping their plans to remain teaching in their current school as well as continue to remain in the teaching profession?

Participants

The participants in this program evaluation are the novice educators who teach at MMS. At MMS, 72% of the school’s 92 teachers are within their first three years of teaching and are working within their probationary period of employment (Hyde, personal communication, July 21, 2017). According to the school’s administrative assistant, during the year previous to this program evaluation, MMS hired 22 new teachers of which 5 were novice educators (Samson, personal communication, September 8, 2016). During the year the program evaluation was conducted, 24 teachers were new to the school and 10 were new to the teaching profession (Samson, personal communication, September 8, 2016). These 10 novice educators were the participants in this program evaluation.
The program evaluation relied upon the use of interviews as a source of data. As a means of answering the evaluation questions regarding the novice educators’ impressions of their experiences with the mentoring program, I wrote nine open-ended interview questions with additional probes to be used as necessary. I conducted a field-test of the questions with three non-participant novice educators and used field-test feedback to modify the questions. These interview questions along with their relationship to the guiding research questions are listed in Table 5. A script that was followed when conducting interviews is in Appendix C.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Bandura’s Sources of Self-Efficacy</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Probes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the perceptions of novice educators regarding the ways their experiences with the new teacher mentoring program influenced their teacher self-efficacy?</td>
<td>Verbal persuasion or the voiced support of a trusted colleague or mentor (Bandura, 1977; Usher &amp; Pajares, 2009)</td>
<td>1A. Tell me about a time when a conversation with your mentor influenced your work or feelings as an educator?</td>
<td>What was different for you after your conversation with your mentor?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An individual’s response to vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998)</td>
<td>1B. As you consider your experiences with the mentor program, which ones most contributed to your becoming a more effective teacher?</td>
<td>What are some other experiences or conversations outside of the mentor program that positively influenced your work as a teacher? What did you take away from that observation that helped you in your work as a teacher? To what extent was your teaching practice different after that induction training? What was that lesson about? How did you know the lesson was a success? What do you think contributed to that success?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An individual’s experience of mastery experiences (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Usher &amp; Pagares, 2009)</td>
<td>1C. Tell me a story about observing another teacher and the impact that had on your own work as an educator?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affective or intense psychological states of arousal such as anxiety, stress, fatigue or other mood states (Bandura, 1977)</td>
<td>1D. Tell me about how the induction training influenced your work as a teacher?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1E. Tell me about a time when a lesson went especially well.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1F. Tell me about a time when you successfully met a particularly difficult challenge in your teaching this year.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1G. Tell me about a time when you had a strong emotional response to an event in your classroom.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1H. How did the mentoring program affect your overall belief in yourself as a teacher?</td>
<td>Do you think you are a better teacher because of the mentoring program? What are some factors that led you to this decision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What influences do novice educators report shaping their plans to remain teaching in their current school as well as continuing to remain in the teaching profession?</td>
<td></td>
<td>2A. Are you planning on returning to this school to teach next year? Why or why not? How did the mentoring program influence your decision?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2B. What are your long-term plans regarding teaching? Which influences have most contributed to these plans?</td>
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The interview questions were influenced by the work of Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly (2011) in that they invited respondents to tell narratives about their experiences with the activities related to the School District’s new teacher mentor program. The
questions are also rooted in Bandura’s construct of teacher self-efficacy. The questions were designed to explore novice educators’ responses to the sources of self-efficacy identified by Bandura (1977) as mastery experiences, vicarious experience, voiced support, and states of arousal (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Usher & Pajares, 2009). Each question is related to one of Alton School District’s mentoring program activities to gauge novice educators’ perceptions of the influence of the specific activity.

**Data Collection**

The purpose of the interviews was not solely to get answers to questions but to get an insight into the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience (Van Manen, 1990). Interviews were conducted over six days at the end of the novice educators’ first year of teaching; during the three weeks following completion of their first state end-of-year standardized tests and before the last day of school. Teachers were invited to voluntarily participate in the interview sessions conducted at the end of the school year. Interviews took place in teacher classrooms and were recorded using an iTalk™ recorder on an iPad. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes. Before leaving the interview room, the recordings were transferred to a password-protected file. The iPad was locked in a file drawer in my home office when it was not in use.

**Data Analysis**

Once interviews were conducted, responses recorded, and transcripts written, I then steps engaged in coding, categorizing, and analysis (Creswell, 2014; Grbich, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Pre-set codes are those based on topics readers might expect to find based upon previous research and common sense (Creswell, 2014, p. 198). Emergent
codes are those that arise from themes in the interviews themselves. Coding and categorizing the recorded conversations places a heuristic filter on these interviews helping to categorize and make meaning from the data collected (Saldana, 2010).

Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend, “creating a provisional ‘start list’ prior to field work” (p. 58) of codes related to the key variables of the research. In this study, the provisional list of codes was related to the various activities of the School District’s mentoring program, perceived positive or negative influences of the program activities, plans and influences regarding teacher attrition or migration. A list of pre-set codes for this study is in Appendix D.

Once the recorded interviews were transcribed, I color-coded and annotated responses in order to categorize and group similar responses. Once the responses were coded and categorized, I was able to present data in tables and narrative passages to convey findings and meaningful trends. As coding and categorizing progressed, I quickly saw the need to abandon the pre-set codes and instead rely entirely upon emergent coding. Working with transcribed data yielded categories of actual responses that did not align with the pre-set codes. Color coding enabled me to group similar responses and themes that emerged.

Coded data results were then analyzed as I sought similarities of perceptions among participants and possible themes and trends. Summaries of individual respondents with overall trends and themes among the participant pool are presented in Chapter 4 of this program evaluation.
Trustworthiness and Credibility

Ensuring research trustworthiness is important whether the data is collected quantitatively or qualitatively (Creswell, 2014). When using an interview conversation as a data source, credibility of the data of is ensured through consistency of procedures in data collection (Creswell, 2014; Grbich, 2007; Kvale, 2007). For example, to ensure trustworthiness, a researcher would script conversation questions as well as follow-up probes and not vary from that script across various data collection settings. These are the guidelines I followed as I conducted interviews with research participants.

Creswell (2013) recommends incorporating validity strategies to determine whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, and the readers of the study. Creswell (2013) suggests eight primary strategies for validity (p. 201). Among the suggested strategies, this study will include the following:

a.) Use rich, thick description to convey findings including detailed descriptions of themes and settings.

a) Include reflective clarification of the bias brought to the research by the researcher.

b) Present any negative or discrepant information that may emerge which runs counter to the emergent themes.

c) Triangulate different data sources by converging the various perspectives from participants.

Employing these strategies while analyzing and reporting data help to ensure accuracy. These are the strategies I employed as I collected, transcribed, coded, categorized, analyzed, and presented data.
To ensure the research approach remains reliable, Yin (2009) suggests researchers document as many steps of the procedure as possible. Each step in the gathering, recording, categorizing, and analyzing this data has been recorded and presented in this evaluation. Additionally, Gibbs (in Creswell, 2013, p. 203) suggests a) “checking transcripts to make sure they do not contain obvious mistakes made during transcription. In the course of data collection, transcripts were reviewed by a trusted colleague to ensure no obvious mistakes were made during transcription. Additionally, individual transcripts were given to each interview participant with a request to ensure no mistakes were made and that the transcript accurately represented the intention of the participant. No mistakes or inaccuracies were reported by research participants. Finally, Gibbs (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 203) advised ensuring there is no drift in the definition of codes during the process of coding. This can be accomplished by constantly comparing data with the codes and by writing memos about the codes and their definitions. These suggested procedures were followed during data transcription, coding, and analysis.

**Delimitations**

For this program evaluation, I have chosen to look at the perceptions of new teachers regarding the influence and impact of the School District’s mentoring program and its activities over their teacher self-efficacy as well as their plans for continuing to teach in their current school. I have specifically decided to ask about their perceptions and teacher self-efficacy rather than focus upon external measures of teacher effectiveness. My primary concern is to ask whether the mentoring program is working from the point of view of its primary constituents, the School District’s new teachers. It is their perspective that matters most in this evaluation.
Limitations

Since the sole source of data collection for this program evaluation is interviews with new teachers, all data will be from the point of view of new teachers with no external verification. If, for example, a teacher believes he or she has successfully navigated a challenging situation, there is no external data to relate to his or her impressions. These limitations will be addressed when reporting data in Chapter 4 and when reflecting upon results in Chapter 5.

Ethical Considerations

The primary stakeholder of this program evaluation is the School District’s Department of Professional Learning. This program evaluation plan was approved by the College of William and Mary’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) as well as the School District’s Supervisor of Program Evaluation. IRB was sought after the proposal was approved by the dissertation committee. The supervising principal of the interview participants was consulted regarding conducting research in her building. Approval for using teacher time was sought and given by the principal. Once the IRB and the School District approved the plan, the evaluation moved forward.

Individual participants were given sufficient opportunity to consider whether they wanted to participate. Informed consent was documented. Participants were notified regarding measures taken to preserve confidentiality as well as the option to discontinue their participation at any time. Participants were advised that the results of this evaluation are to be used solely for targeting support and will not be conveyed to school leaders who serve supervisory roles. Letters of invitation and informed consent are in Appendix F. The information derived from this program evaluation will not be used to assess nor
evaluate individuals. The information will be used to identify possible areas of weaknesses in training or communication within the School District’s mentoring program. Copies will be given to research participants.

Due to my position within the School District’s Office of Professional Learning, I am known to the staff at MMS but share neither professional nor casual relationships with any of the study participants. I served as an instructional coach in this building four years ago. However, the level of staff turnover at the school has been such that few of the school’s current instructional staff members were there when I worked there. None of the study participants worked with me. I have served as a facilitator in district-wide staff trainings where several novice educators were present. I have co-facilitated mentor training for several of the mentors of novice educators in this building. The current administrative staff of the MMS were my administrators when I worked at the school though none were my direct supervisor. My existing professional relationships with office and administrative staff smoothed routes of access for this research.

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) write that the role of the researcher is, “critical to the quality of the scientific knowledge and the soundness of ethical decisions in qualitative inquiry” (p. 119). The role of the researcher is substantial in qualitative research that depends upon interviews. As the evaluator and sole collector of data, there was great potential for evaluator bias. This potential for bias is made greater by my own interest in the success or failure of the program. As an employee of the Alton School District, my role is a Professional Development Specialist, partly responsible for the ongoing operation of the District’s mentoring program. It is the perceived influence of the program over which I have oversight that is being assessed.
My role in this program evaluation is that of a participant observer. Bernard (1994) supports the use of participant observation in program evaluations claiming that researcher familiarity with the community, “lends credence to one’s interpretations of the observations” (p. 142). Some of the advantages of participant observation are that it can allow for richly detailed descriptions and interpretations of data and can improve the quality of data collection and interpretation with the added insights to the culture of the observed phenomenon (Bernard, 1994; DeMunck Sobo, 1998; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). My insights and experience with the context and activities of the mentoring program have helped me to interpret data in a more meaningful way for stakeholders.

Strategies to reduce the impact of evaluator bias include using multiple sources of evidence to ensure robust collections of data and engaging in a critically reflective process to review and articulate potential bias in the data analysis. Additional strategies include using a predetermined set of open-ended, research-sourced questions and probes for the interviews that invite respondents to tell their own narratives regarding their perceived influences. While presenting data I have made every attempt to remain as objective and transparent regarding potential bias as possible.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine whether Alton School District’s new teacher mentor program is meeting its expressed goals of improving teacher self-efficacy and teacher retention. The evaluation data will provide a guide for leaders to improve practices within the School District’s mentoring program. In order to evaluate the program, two research questions were used:

1. What are the perceptions of novice educators regarding the ways their experiences with the new teacher mentor program influenced their teacher self-efficacy?
2. What influences do novice educators report shaping their plans to remain teaching in their current school as well as continue to remain in the teaching profession?

The intent of the evaluation research questions was to determine the perceptions of novice educators within a single, hard-to-staff school regarding their experiences with the School District’s mentoring program. New teachers were interviewed in person and asked eight questions regarding their experiences with the School District’s Mentoring Program. Each of these questions was designed to look at sources of teacher self-efficacy as identified by Bandera (1977) and to evaluate the impact the School District’s mentoring program had upon their teacher self-efficacy. Additionally, the new teachers were asked three questions regarding their plans for continuing their careers in education.
as well as questions about the factors that may have influenced their plans for the future.

In this chapter, the qualitative findings are presented.

**Demographic Information**

The Alton School District’s New Teacher Mentoring Program targets teachers who are new to the teaching profession. For this study, I focused upon one school that had 10 new educators. I sent email invitations to each of the new teachers at MMS. All 10 invited teachers agreed to be interviewed. Of the 10, five were recent college graduates from teacher preparation programs, two were career switchers through a state sponsored career-switcher program, two were career switchers who did not come through formal career switcher programs, and one was a recent graduate from a student services preparation program (one that prepares school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. See Table 6.

Table 6

**MMS New Teachers’ Paths to Classroom Instruction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path to the Classroom</th>
<th>Out of 10 New Teachers Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New to teaching: Recent college graduate</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New to teaching: Part of a formal career switcher program</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New to teaching: Career switcher but not part of a formal program</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New to teaching: Graduate of a student services licensing program</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings for Evaluation Question 1**

What are the perceptions of novice educators regarding the ways their experiences with the new teacher mentor program influenced their teacher self-efficacy?
The purpose of the interviews was to collect and analyze data regarding the perceptions of new teachers regarding the ways their experiences with the Alton School District Mentoring Program influenced their teacher self-efficacy. Each interview question was field tested with a first year teacher before it was used with interview participants. Based upon field test outcomes, the wording of some questions were revised for the sake of clarity before they were used with the interview participants. Before interviews began, participants were informed that their participation would help to assess the effectiveness of the School District’s Mentoring Program. They were advised that the interview process would include a series of questions common to all interviewees. Participants were informed that interviews would be recorded and that participants would have an opportunity to see the transcripts of their interviews as a means of verifying the accuracy of the transcriptions. Participants were advised of the measures taken to preserve confidentiality of the interviews. The interview participants were encouraged to provide honest responses regarding their first-year teaching experiences.

In addition to recording interviews, anecdotal notes were taken during the interviews as an attempt to more fully capture participants’ reactions to the interview questions. Participants were advised that anecdotal notes would be taken but transcripts of these notes were not shared with the participants. The interviews took place over six days in June of 2017 while school was still in session. Interviews took place in each teacher’s classroom or office either before school or after school according to each teacher’s choice. Appointments were made and letters of consent were sent via email for participants to preview before the time of their interviews. Consent letters were signed in person just prior to each interview. At the start of each interview, respondents were
shown the iPad that would be used as a recording device and advised that a sound check would take place before each interview. Interviewees were shown the list of questions and were informed that probe questions might be posed as needed.

The interviews conducted with 10 new teachers focused upon their first-year experiences with the School District’s mentoring program and their perceptions of those experiences upon their teacher self-efficacy. There were eight questions related to teacher self-efficacy. As part of the interview, the participants were shown a list of the School District’s mentoring program activities.

**Findings for Interview Question 1A.** *Tell me about a time when a conversation with your mentor influenced your work or feelings as an educator. What was different for you after your conversation with your mentor?*

This first interview question is rooted in Bandura’s (1997) identified source of self-efficacy; verbal persuasion or the voiced support of a trusted colleague or mentor. Of the 10 new educators interviewed, seven perceived conversations with their mentors positively influenced their work and feelings about themselves as an educator, two did not see these conversations as positively influencing their work or feelings, and one was not assigned a mentor. The outcomes are displayed in Table 7.
Summary of Interview Respondents Who Found Conversations with Mentors to Be Helpful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversations with Mentors</th>
<th>Of 10 respondents interviewed:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent could identify a time when a conversation with the mentor positively influenced his or her classroom instruction.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent did not believe conversations with mentors positively influenced his or her work.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent did not have an assigned mentor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 10 new educators interviewed, one was not assigned a mentor, two did not find conversations with their mentors to be particularly helpful. Seven perceived that conversations with their mentors positively influenced their work and feelings about themselves as educators.

The person who was not assigned a mentor was hired in January after the school year was underway and student enrollments numbers warranted additional staffing. Although this novice educator participated in some of the activities of the mentoring program such as quarterly District-wide induction training and monthly school-based induction, she was mistakenly not assigned a mentor. This novice educator found herself turning to her supervisor in order to get questions answered. She also felt as though she was still unsure of herself as an educator within this School District. She feels as though she is not well equipped to meet the challenges of her work. An illustrative quote that summarizes her experience is, “I feel like I’m always seeking out information that I feel should have been
given to me and that has shaken my confidence about being successful in this school” (Respondent 10).

With the two interview respondents who did not believe their mentors positively influenced their work, one believed that he came to his position with all the skills and confidence he needed to accomplish his work. He did not believe his mentor contributed to his skills or feelings of self-confidence. Specifically he said, “I don’t think it impacted me at all. I’m pretty confident already” (Respondent 7). The other respondent had two different mentors over the course of her school year and did not believe either one satisfactorily met her needs. She said that her mentors did not make themselves available to her sufficiently to make a difference in her work.

Among the seven who found conversations with their mentors positively influenced their work, several themes emerged. Six respondents perceived conversations with their mentors positively influenced their classroom instruction. The new educators referenced specific instances of support with instruction in such ways as, “definitely helped me a lot with lesson plans” (Respondent 5), or “showed me interactive ways to get students engaged” (Respondent 9), or “helped me to think about really teaching the material rather than just delving into a bunch of worksheets” (Respondent 4). Two interviewees mentioned ways conversations with mentors supported their thinking about instructional pacing. An example of a description of one of these conversations stated, “with her I learned how much time [each lesson] would actually take” (Respondent 2).

A second theme emerged from those who found conversations with mentors to be influential. This theme was regarding classroom management. Three interviewees discussed ways conversations with their mentors influenced their belief in their ability to
manage classroom behavior. Specifically, one novice educator said, “when I was talking to my mentor it was about how to deal with misbehavior. She really helped me to see that I needed to be more structured” (Respondent 8).

And a final theme that emerged with interview question one was related to emotional support. Three respondents mentioned receiving positive emotional support in conversations with their mentors. Specifically, one respondent said, “it was just nice in a kind of scary time to have someone” (Respondent 3).

**Findings for Interview Question 1B. As you consider your experiences with the mentor program, which one most contributed to your becoming a more effective teacher? What are some other experiences or conversations outside of the mentor program that positively influenced your work as a teacher?**

As they answered this question, participants reflected over the list of activities included in the Alton School District Mentoring Program. These activities, listed in the program evaluation Logic Model in Appendix A include: District-wide orientation, school based orientation, content-based District-wide induction trainings, conversations with assigned mentors, school based monthly meetings with lead mentor/novice educators, and mentor-led classroom observations and coaching conversations. Table 8 lists the findings of this interview question and shows the Mentoring Program activities the interviewed novice educators perceived to be most impactful.
Table 8

*Mentor Program Activities Perceived to Contribute Most to Teacher Effectiveness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Program Activities</th>
<th>Of 10 Respondents Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District-wide orientation</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School based orientation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-based District-wide induction trainings</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with assigned mentors</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School based monthly meetings with lead mentor/novice educators</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor-led classroom observations &amp; coaching conversations</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five of 10 respondents perceived their conversations with assigned mentors to contribute the most to their becoming better teachers. As one respondent put it, “it’s nice to have someone that you can turn to at all times who has been here a long time and who has been in your shoes” (Respondent 3). Other respondents described their experiences as:

- “definitely helped with lesson plans” (Respondent 5)
- “Showed me interactive ways to get students engaged” (Respondent 9)
- “Helped me think about really teaching the material rather than just delving into a bunch of worksheets” (Respondent 4)

Another respondent identified the confidential and informal nature of conversations to be most beneficial.

Two respondents perceived the School District’s content-based District-wide induction trainings contributed most to their becoming a more effective teacher. One cited this content-based training to be most helpful because, “it helped me think about the curriculum” (Respondent 9). And one respondent perceived the school based orientation contributed most to his becoming a better teacher. He said he liked the way it, “integrated
[him] with the school community” (Respondent 7). This respondent reflected that the people he met during this orientation session became the people he turned to most often throughout the year for instructional support as well as social interaction.

Two respondents perceived other experiences, outside of the Mentoring Program to be most influential on their work. One said it was a combination of the, “kids’ needs with their frequent emergencies and the work environment itself” (Respondent 10). This respondent was quick to note she had not been a part of most of the Mentoring Program activities because she joined the school late in the year. The second respondent identified conversations with the school’s lead mentor to be the most influential on her work as a novice educator. This respondent said she did not necessarily get her needs met from her assigned mentor but she was able to find the answers to most of her questions when she sought out advice from the school’s lead mentor.

**Findings for Interview Question 1C.** *Tell me a story about observing another teacher and the impact that had on your work as a teacher. What are some things you took away from that observation that helped you in your work as a teacher?*

This question is based upon Bandura’s identified source of self-efficacy, an individual’s response to vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Among the six who observed another teacher’s instruction, a theme that emerged was that of observing strong classroom management. All six teachers who observed another teacher commented upon the effective classroom management they observed. When a probe was posed, each of the six commented that they took away classroom management techniques that helped them in their work as a teacher. Some noted that they were aware of many of the strategies and techniques that were in use in the observed
classrooms. But until they observed others using these strategies, they did not believe they would work for their own classrooms. The observations helped them to realize they too could successfully apply the observed strategies.

Notable among the comments in the interviews were, “the kids knew what they were supposed to be doing and there was never any confusion in his classroom. That’s something I try to replicate in my own [class]” (Respondent 7). He continued by noting that many of the strategies he saw in place in the observed classroom were strategies he had learned in his monthly school-based induction trainings but had never actually seen in action. Seeing these strategies work successfully in another classroom led him to attempt to use them in his own classes. And his attempts were successful in helping him alleviate what he perceived to be confusion on the part of his students.

Another respondent noted she took away, “classroom management. I saw her and started using some of those things in my class and it got my kids turned around really quickly.” (Respondent 6). She said she saw strategies used in the observed classroom that she immediately applied to her own classroom. A third commented on observing another teacher who, “laid out a lot of procedural things…He had lots of structure and it definitely helped how I laid out my classroom. I switched it about half way through the year. And my classroom management definitely improved” (Respondent 5).

**Findings for Interview Question 1D.** *Tell me about how the induction training influenced your work as a teacher? What did you take away from any of those sessions that influenced your work? To what extent was your teaching practice different after that induction training?*
Of the 10 novice educators interviewed, seven attended induction training and three did not. Each of the seven interviewees was able to discuss specific thinking or strategies they took away from a countywide induction training. Take-aways from the induction included:

- Engaging students with documents-based lessons as noted by three respondents
- Strategies for student engagement as noted by four respondents
- Solution-focused training as noted by one respondent
- Assessment strategies as noted by two respondents

Although seven educators could articulate what they learned during the induction training sessions, only three were able to identify that their practice was different as a result of the training or were able to identify what they used in their own classrooms. Of those three, one identified looking for ways to use the new strategies in her work with students. Specifically, she said, “that [professional development] just kind of told me to slow down, no matter how crazy the situation and actually plan an approach. It was a good reset button” (Respondent 10). A second interviewee said, regarding specific English Language Learner strategies she learned, “seeing the language that she used, that definitely changed how I went back and did things” (Respondent 2). The third respondent said she was able to apply strategies learned through the training to help her de-escalate a behavioral challenge with a student (Respondent 10).

**Findings for Interview Question 1E.** Tell me about a time when a lesson went especially well. What was that lesson about? How did you know the lesson was a success? What do you think contributed to that success?
This question draws from Bandura’s source of self-efficacy identified as the experience of mastery experiences (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Usher & Pajares, 2009). Each of the 10 interviewed participants described a time when a lesson went well. Nine identified the success of a lesson by describing student engagement and high rates of student mastery of material as demonstrated through informal assessments. The tenth ascribed success when a conflict with a student resulted in a calm resolution.

When the respondents described their successful lessons, they used the phrases such as, “I did an informal exit ticket with them… they really got it. It was real higher order thinking” (Respondent 6), and “I collected exit tickets which were the lab sheets… and for the most part they were on the right track” (Respondent 4), and “they really had fun; everyone was participating” (Respondent 7). Other descriptions included, “I could tell that 98-99% were actually doing the work that I actually asked them to do. And as long as the kids are doing it, I feel pretty good about it” (Respondent 1).

Each interviewed participant described the content of their lessons with descriptive phrases like, “it was a lesson on checks and balances” (Respondent 7) or “I was showing them the importance of checking their work as they went along” (Respondent 3) or “it was a lesson on inert gasses” (Respondent 9). The specific topic of the lesson did not seem to be important to the respondents. What they wanted to share was the elements that made each lesson successful.

When the interviewees expressed their perceptions of factors that contributed to the successful lesson, they had varying responses as shown in Table 9.

56
Table 9

Novice Educators’ Perceived Most Important Contributions to a Successful Lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Contributions to a Successful Lesson</th>
<th>Of 10 Respondents Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies and information learned through School District’s content-based District-wide induction trainings</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies and information learned through conversations with mentors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies and information learned through school based monthly meetings with lead mentor/novice educators</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies and information learned through collaborative learning teams and colleagues other than mentors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies and information learned through personal research</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents that cited the content-based District-wide induction trainings as the source of their success described specific strategies or programs they learned and applied. Respondents citing school based monthly meetings as the source of their successful lesson cited specific strategies for engagement learned during these meetings. Four teachers identified conversations with mentors or other school colleagues as the source of the ideas applied in the successful lessons. And one teacher identified an online lesson-sharing database she researched herself as a source for her successful lesson.

Findings for Question 1F. Tell me about a time when you successfully met a particularly difficult challenge in your teaching this year. What do you think contributed to your success in that situation?

This question is based upon Bandura’s source of self-efficacy identified as an individual’s experience of mastery experiences (Bandura, 1977; Tschanzen-Moran et al., 1998; Usher & Pajares, 2009). All ten respondents identified a difficult challenge from their first year of teaching and were able to identify what they perceived to be
contributions to their success in navigating the situation. Four described ways they called upon their personal inner resources and innate ability to solve problems. One said she received assistance through conversation with her mentor. Four respondents identified strategies and skills learned through a professional development training on classroom management. And one respondent said she used strategies learned in her teacher preparation program. The sources of those contributions are identified in Table 10.

Table 10

| New Teacher Perceived Most Important Contributions to Success in Navigating Difficult Classroom Experiences During the First Year of Teaching |
|---|---|
| Sources of Success in Navigation of Challenges | Of 10 Respondents Interviewed |
| Personal inner resources and ability to solve problems | 4 |
| Assistance received through conversation with a mentor | 1 |
| Professional development session focusing on classroom management | 4 |
| Resources from college teacher preparation | 1 |

A theme that emerged from responses to this question was a sharing of information regarding relationships with students. As the respondents described challenging situations from their first year of teaching, all 10 identified difficult student behavior as their challenge. As they described various solutions to managing difficult student behavior, six identified the importance of building relationships with their students as a means of successfully navigating the difficult situation. One described adding classroom structures and routines to support behavioral management. And three described solutions they brought forward from their own interpersonal problem solving skills.

**Findings for Question 1G.** Tell me about a time when you had a strong emotional response to an event in your classroom. How did you manage your emotions?
This question is rooted in Bandura’s source of self-efficacy identified as affective or intense psychological states of arousal such as anxiety, stress, fatigue or other mood states (Bandura, 1977). As the interviewees reflected upon strong emotional responses to events in their classrooms, eight identified means of managing their emotions as well as the source of support for that management while two were only able to identify the emotion and did not identify how they managed the emotion. In both cases where respondents were only able to identify the emotion, it was a positive emotion in response to something they perceived to be good, specifically a student passing his end-of-year standardized test and a student making significant progress in standardized reading assessments.

For the eight respondents who identified means of managing strong emotions, the source of that support is identified in the Table 11. Four educators identified drawing upon their personal inner resources for managing their strong emotions. Tools they employed included “deep breathing” (Respondents 2 and 5), reasoning with their students (Respondent 3), and self-care, specifically, “taking some time for myself…shut the door and have a few minutes” (Respondent 10). Two respondents described having conversations with their mentors and receiving supportive advice and feedback to assist their navigation of strong emotion. One respondent identified the support and assistance of her team as a means of helping her navigate strong emotion. And another respondent identified her prior experience with students as helping her navigate her emotions. However, she noted, “But still it left me unsettled” (Respondent 4).
Table 11

_Self-Identified Sources of Support for Teachers Navigating Strong Emotional Responses to Events in Their Classrooms_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Support for Navigating Strong Emotion</th>
<th>Of 8 Teachers Who Were Able to Identify Sources of Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Inner Resources</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with Mentors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from Colleagues/ Team Members</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Experience with Students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings for Question 1H. How did the mentoring program affect your overall belief in yourself as a teacher? Do you think you are a better teacher because of the Mentoring Program?

Seven of the 10 teachers interviewed responded that they believed the Mentoring Program positively affected their overall belief in themselves as a teacher. For the three who did not believe the Mentoring Program positively affected their belief in themselves as teachers, one said, “I don’t think it impacted me at all. I’m pretty confident already” (Respondent 7). Another respondent who was not assigned a mentor said, “I feel like I’m always seeking out information that I feel should have been given to me. And that has shaken my confidence about being successful in this school” (Respondent 10). The third said, “I wish she had taught me now to teach the lesson differently. I wanted to learn. I knew how to lecture. But I needed someone to teach me another way of teaching” (Respondent 9).

The seven teachers who perceived the Mentoring Program had a positive influence on their belief in themselves as teachers cited many examples that could be summarized as four different ways they had been supported. These are displayed on Table 12.
Table 12

*Ways Novice Educators Perceived the Mentoring Program Positively Affected Their Belief in Themselves as Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Support Educators Perceived Receiving from the Mentoring Program</th>
<th>Among the 7 Respondents Citing Positive Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Mentoring Program Gave Me Confidence to Do My Job</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mentoring Program Provided Emotional Support</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mentoring Program Helped Me with Classroom Management</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mentoring Program Helped Me Improve My Classroom Instruction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Teachers cited multiple ways their belief in themselves was positively affected by the Mentoring Program.

When identifying ways the respondents perceived they had become better teachers as a result of the Mentoring Program, they cited such reflections as, “I think if I didn’t have the Mentoring Program I would have had a really hard time. [My mentor] really helped me become a better teacher” (Respondent 6). “Yes. I think I’m a better teacher because of working with my mentor… it’s scary to be here. It’s so hard to be a new teacher” (Respondent 3).

As respondents reflected upon whether they thought they were a better teacher because of the mentoring program, four provided recommendations for how they felt the program could be improved. Among these recommendations for how they wish they had been supported were:

- “I wish I had learned more about classroom management from my mentor” (Respondent 9).

- “I wish I could have observed my mentor but we had the exact same schedule so I couldn’t get in to observe him” (Respondent 7).
• “I wish there was a check-list for how to begin to set up my classroom or what to do on my first day in my room. It’s overwhelming” (Respondent 3).

• “I had a bunch of resources. But the thing I needed was how to teach them” (Respondent 9).

• “I wish there were a way to know better what I was getting into. I’m someone who likes to know everything before I go into a situation…and this is the least prepared I’ve felt in a long time” (Respondent 10).

Findings for Evaluation Question Two

What influences do novice educators report shaping their plans to remain teaching in their current school as well as continue to remain in the teaching profession?

The second portion of the program evaluation is to determine influences upon new teachers plans for returning to MMS. Interview questions attempted to determine distinctions among influences upon teacher retention, remaining at the school where they currently teach, and upon teacher migration, remaining within the school district where they are currently employed.

Findings for Question 2A. Are you planning on returning to this school to teach next year? What are some factors that led you to this decision?

Of the 10 new teachers interviewed, only one said she would not be returning to teach at MMS next year. See Table 13. The teacher, Respondent 9, who will not be returning did not have her contract renewed by her principal. She cited reasons of classroom discipline as the cause of her non-renewal of contract. She hopes to teach in a high school next year where she can focus upon her content. She expressed frustration
with classroom management. She expressed a belief that neither the school administrators
nor her mentor were responsive to her requests for support.

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents’ Plans for 2017-18 School Year</th>
<th>Of 10 Teachers Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers who will be returning to MMS for the 2017-18 School Year</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers who will not be returning to MMS for the 2017-18 School Year</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although nine of the 10 new teachers said they would be returning to MMS for
the next school year, not all the returners expressed enthusiasm about their decision to
return. Of the nine who said they would be returning to MMS, two expressed reluctance
to return. The reluctant returners expressed different reasons for their reluctance. One
respondent said,

Ideally I would have liked to have moved on. I don’t think this school is the right
fit for me. But ultimately I can’t risk being without work. So I had to stay and
hope that next year I can get to know the transfer system enough to move on.

(Respondent 10)
The second reluctant returner said,

Whether I stay or not really depends on the administration and how I feel about what is going on up there. It’s not the students. It’s not the community. It’s, you know, we follow this rule. And then they break it. And we follow this rule. And they break it. I certainly want to stay within the county but I’m not sure about this particular school. (Respondent 2)

New teachers who decided to return to MMS expressed multiple reasons for returning. Their reasons are listed in Table 14. Four teachers cited good relationships with staff as their reason for wanting to return. Four said they enjoyed the students. Three said they had worked hard to learn the routines and curriculum and wanted to be able to apply their experience to the next year. Two said they had good relationships with the school administrators and wanted to return to work for them. One of the enthusiastic returners said he felt good about the current administration but would leave if a position opened at the high school where he is currently coaching. He said, “The only other school I would like to go to is Hillmont because I coach there” (Respondent 7).

Table 14

Factors That Led to New Teachers Deciding to Return to Teach at MMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for staying at MMS</th>
<th>Among the 7 Respondents Expressing Enthusiasm About Returning to MMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed working with the MMS staff</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed the MMS students</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believed they knew what to expect next year</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked the MMS Administration</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked the support received from a mentor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Teachers cited multiple factors that influenced their decision to return.

Findings for Question 2B. What are your long-term plans for staying at this school?
Although nine of the 10 new teachers appeared to be very clear about their plans to return to MMS for the following school year, several expressed differing plans beyond the next year. These differing plans ranged from leaving after this school year, to four who identified no commitment beyond next year, to three respondents with no commitment beyond year three, to two respondents who plan on returning to MMS beyond three years. These data are displayed in Table 15 and summarized in Table 16.

Table 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Teachers’ Long-term Plans for Staying at MMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plans For Returning To MMS Beyond Next Year</th>
<th>Of 10 Respondents Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not returning next year</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returning next year but not committed to returning after that</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed to remaining at MMS for 3 years but uncertain after that</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed to remaining for 3 years and beyond</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 10 new teachers interviewed, only two were committed to remaining at MMS beyond three years. The three-year mark is the point at which new teachers are eligible to move from year-to-year provisional contracts to continuing contracts.

**Findings for Question 2C. What are your long-term plans regarding teaching?**

*Do you plan to stay at this school? Do you plan to remain in this school District? Which influences have most contributed to these plans?*

This question sought to distinguish contributing influences among those new teachers who plan on remaining within the Alton School District. Specific reasons are shown in Table 17 and a summary of influences is displayed in Table 18. Of the 10 novice educators interviewed, two plan on returning to MMS beyond three years, five plan on eventually leaving MMS but on staying within Alton School District, while three plan on leaving Alton School District.
# Table 17

**New Teachers Long-term Plans Regarding Teaching and Remaining in the District Along with the Influences that Contributed to These Plans**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Do you plan to remain in this school district?</th>
<th>Long-term plans</th>
<th>Contributing Influences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>“I want to stay in teaching for a while. I want to get my master’s degree and get certified in another subject.”</td>
<td>“I think I’m pretty good at teaching but I want to get better. I like the hours of teaching at a middle school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>Yes (for 5 years)</td>
<td>“For the first five years of my license I plan on being in Virginia. But after that I would like to get the reciprocity to go back to Maryland. I want to get a master’s degree and eventually work with curriculum development.”</td>
<td>“Maryland is my home base. I know everything there. And I would like to work in a county there.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>“I want to get a master’s degree or find some other specialty. I like teaching middle school language arts and I just got my ESOL endorsement.”</td>
<td>“I grew up in Alton and I went to this school... this is my home.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>“I would like to do a master’s program and just keep moving up in the world of teaching.”</td>
<td>“My husband works in this district.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>“I will stay at this school. If not, then I will move within the district to a high school.”</td>
<td>“I’m a career switcher. And I would like to do whatever I can to stay on this path and grow here.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>“Next is to get my masters. I was thinking maybe a reading specialist. Or maybe administrative.”</td>
<td>“The strongest influences are my desire to stay with kids and mentor these kids. I had a strong mentor in my life and I want to do that for these kids.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>“I’d like to go back to grad school in five or 10 years and study for either public policy or law. I’d like to help do education policy.”</td>
<td>“Education policy is my hobby. I love history, government, and politics. I’m from a very political family.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>“I’m staying at MMS for at least 2 more years. Definitely go to high school. In the spring I’m going to take a librarian’s asters maybe K-12 librarianship.”</td>
<td>“I think just self motivation. I know I want to have a doctorate at some point. I like to learn. I like to learn.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 9</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>“I want to teach high school.”</td>
<td>“The behavioral issues are not the same in high school and the content is different.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 10</td>
<td>Yes (for 10 years)</td>
<td>“I want to work in a middle school for 10 years and then leave to go into private practice.”</td>
<td>“My passion is counseling. I struggle with the bureaucracy in a public school. Ultimately I would like to be in an environment where I just counsel. I want to spend my day doing that.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18

Summary of MMS Teachers Long-Range Plans Regarding Retention and Migration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Teacher Plans</th>
<th>Of 10 New Teachers Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan on remaining at MMS beyond 3 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan on leaving MMS but want to remain in the School District</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan on eventually leaving the School District</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A summary of significant findings from interview data related to evaluation question one is displayed in Table 19 with positive influences on teacher self-efficacy noted with + and negative contributions indicated with Δ.
Table 19

*Summary of Interview Data with Significant Findings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Sources of Data</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Significant Findings + / Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with mentor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+ Helped with classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From interview Q1A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+ Provided social/emotional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+ Provided resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Δ Did not help with classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Δ Could not help me learn how to teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Δ No mentor- had to run around looking for help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of Mentoring Program that most contributed to self-perceived effectiveness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+ Conversations with my mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From interview Q1B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+ Content Induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of peer observations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+ Other Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From interview Q1C</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+ School based Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Δ Was unable to observe a peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of District-Wide induction</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>+ Learned helpful instructional strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From interview Q1D</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Δ Did not attend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived contributions to a successful lesson</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+ Strategies from District-wide induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From interview Q1E</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+ Strategies learned from mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+ Strategies from school based novice meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+ Strategies from colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+ Strategies from personal research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived contributions to successful navigation of a challenge</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+ Personal inner resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From interview Q1F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+ Assistance from a mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+ Professional development on classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+ Resources from college teacher preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived source of support for strong emotional response to classroom events</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+ Conversations with mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From interview Q1G</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+ Support from colleagues or team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+ Prior experience w/ students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did mentoring program affect belief in yourself as a teacher</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+ Mentoring program gave me confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From interview Q1H</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+ Mentoring program gave emotional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+ Mentoring program helped me with classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Δ I wish mentoring program would have taught me how to teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Δ I wish mentoring program taught classroom management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary findings for teacher retention and migration are shown in Table 20.
Chapter 4 provided an analysis of data sourced through interviews with 10 new teachers at a single hard-to-staff school. These findings were used to inform two evaluation questions. Summary of these findings along with implications for practice including recommendations and suggestions for future research follow in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5

Recommendations

The purpose of this case study program evaluation was to explore new teacher perceptions of the Alton School District’s mentoring program and its impact on teacher self-efficacy as well as its impact upon new teacher retention and migration. The focus of the study was 10 new teachers who were just completing their first year of teaching in a hard-to-staff school. Through one-on-one interviews, the study sought to identify whether the School District’s mentoring program was meeting its expressed goals of improving teacher self-efficacy and teacher retention. Upon gathering new teacher perceptions of the mentoring program, the next step is to target ways the mentoring program could be improved. Findings from the study and recommendations for the program improvement are provided in this chapter.

As rates of teacher retention fall and teacher supply diminishes, supporting and retaining new teachers becomes ever more necessary and important. Alton school district’s mentoring program seeks to support new teachers with a mentoring program that (a) assigns a mentor to each new teacher, (b) provides a district-wide first-day orientation, (c) offers a school based-orientation for teacher’s first day, (d) provides content-based district-wide induction trainings, (e) offers monthly school based meetings
between lead mentors and novice educators, and (e) invites new teachers to participate in peer observations with their mentors.

Summary Findings

**Evaluation question one.** What are the perceptions of novice educators regarding the ways their experiences with the new teacher mentor program influenced their teacher self-efficacy? When new teachers were asked the questions, “How did the mentoring program affect your overall belief in yourself as a teacher? Do you think you are a better teacher because of the Mentoring Program?” Seven responded positively citing specific ways they felt the mentoring program affected them. Five said they felt the mentoring program gave them confidence to do their jobs, three cited emotional support, one identified help with classroom management, and another said she believed her classroom instruction was better as a result of mentoring program activities.

New educators who participated in Alton School District’s mentoring program found many of its activities to be supportive of their improved teacher self-efficacy. The mentoring activity perceived to be the most supportive was conversations new teachers had with their mentors. Five respondents indicated these conversations were the largest contributors to their overall effectiveness as teachers. These findings uphold Bandura’s (1997) construct that one source of individuals’ self-efficacy beliefs are developed through verbal persuasions or voiced assistance of a trusted colleague or mentor.

Second in perceived significance was participation in content-based district-wide induction trainings. Two new teachers indicated these trainings changed the ways they thought about their own teaching. A third teacher did not identify this activity as being most impactful to her self-perceived effectiveness but in a response to another question,
she stated that the ways she learned to think about her teaching as a result of these trainings was, “eye opening” (Respondent 9).

The third mentoring program activity perceived by interviewed new teachers to have contributed to the overall success of their effectiveness as teachers was the school-based orientation. One new teacher identified that the connections he made during that orientation session developed into relationships that supported him throughout the year.

When asked about specific mentoring program activities, seven of the 10 interviewed said they learned helpful strategies for instruction through content-based district-wide induction trainings. Each of the seven said they successfully applied these strategies in their classroom teaching. The success of these applications helped new teachers improve their overall self-perception of the effectiveness of their teaching. Three said these training programs changed the ways they thought about their own instruction. And three teachers did not attend any of these trainings. The findings demonstrating the perceived impact of new teachers’ successful application of strategies learned content-based district-wide induction trainings endorse Bandura’s (1997) construct of sources of self-efficacy. When an individual successfully accomplishes a task, that individual experiences a sense of mastery along with an expectation that the same task will be completed successfully in the future (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Usher & Pajares, 2009). New teachers’ perceptions of successful application of learned teaching strategies contribute to their overall sense of teacher self-efficacy.

Six new teachers participated in peer observations as part of the mentoring program. Each of the six who participated in observations said they learned strategies for classroom management that they immediately applied to their own classrooms. Four of
the new teachers interviewed did not participate in peer observations. Peer observations offer a significant source of self-efficacy for a specific task, which can lead to persistence, effort, and ultimately task execution (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). This missed opportunity for observing peers is unfortunate and is a loss for the new teachers who were not able to participate.

When new teachers were asked about contributing factors to a successful lesson, they cited (a) strategies learned through content-based district-wide induction trainings with three respondents, (b) strategies learned from school based meetings with lead mentors with two respondents, (c) strategies learned from mentors with two respondents, (d) strategies learned from colleagues with two responses, and (e) strategies learned through personal research with one respondent.

As new teachers shared their perceptions about contributing factors to successfully navigating challenges in the classroom, they cited a reliance upon (a) personal inner resources with four respondents, (b) strategies learned through professional development on classroom management with four respondents, (c) assistance from a mentor with one respondent, and (d) one respondent reporting use of resources learned through a college teacher preparation program.

Interviews with new teachers revealed that failure to participate in some of the School Districts mentoring program activities had negative consequences. For example, one of the MMS new teachers for 2016-2017 was not assigned a mentor. In her words, she spent a lot of time having to, “run around looking for help” (Respondent 10). This same new educator said she found herself feeling unsure of herself as an educator within this School District and as though she was not well equipped to meet the challenges of
her work. This new teacher plans to leave the school next year as soon as she can, “figure out the transfer system” (Respondent 10). She felt as though she never fit into the school and did not feel connected to its staff. This missed opportunity to support a new teacher through the assignment of a mentor harkens back to the source of self-efficacy identified as verbal persuasions or the voiced support of a trusted colleague or mentor (Bandura, 1977; Usher & Pajares, 2009). By not having a mentor, this new educator missed out on a significant source of teacher self-efficacy.

Another area where failure to participate in an activity offered by the School District’s mentoring program appeared to miss an opportunity for providing support was with peer observations. All participants in peer observations reported learning insights and strategies in classroom management that they were able to successfully apply to their own classes. The four who did not participate in peer observations reported having unmet needs for support with classroom management. Failing to participate in peer observations deprived these four new teachers of a significant source of self-efficacy. As humans observe other humans they develop self-efficacy for a specific task, which can lead to persistence, effort, and ultimately task execution (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). These teachers missed participating in a possible source of improving their teacher self-efficacy.

Areas that produced the greatest impact were classroom management, instructional resources, instructional strategies, and social and emotional support. Significant areas that need additional support include support for classroom management for all new teachers, support for methods of grade-level appropriate instructional
strategies, participation in peer observations for all new teachers, and the assignment of mentors to all new educators.

Evaluation question two. What influences do novice educators report shaping their plans to remain teaching in their current school as well as continuing to remain in the teaching profession?

Nine of the new teachers reported plans to return to MMS for the upcoming school year. Reported influences upon their decisions to stay include comfort with the staff, comfort with the students, comfort with the administration, and a sense of home.

Of the nine who plan to return to MMS, only two reported planning to remain at the Middle School beyond three years. Three said they plan to return to MMS for three years but were uncertain of their plans after that. And four reported they plan to leave MMS after the next school year. Influences for planning to leave MMS include a desire to teach at a high school level within the Alton School District reported by five teachers, a desire to return to a home state reported by one, and a desire to leave public education in favor of private practice reported by one. These factors were largely personal and existed prior to taking a job at MMS. Their first year of teaching and the School District’s mentoring program seemed to have little influence over these decisions. Although one new teacher indicated that her decision to stay beyond next year would depend upon whether she perceived an improvement in consistency on the part of school administration regarding school rules.

When asked about long-term plans related to working in education, two interviewed teachers reported a desire to remain a classroom teacher at MMS for the long term. Five reported wanting to leave MMS but to remain within the school district. And
three reported a desire to leave the School District. Reasons for wanting to leave the
district included (a) one teacher’s desire to return to her home state, (b) one educator’s
desire to leave public education and go into private practice, and (c) the third teacher was
not given a chance to return because of the non-renewal of her contract. Reasons for
wanting to leave MMS but remain teaching within the Alton School District included (a)
a desire to teach at a high school level and (b) a desire to work with a different principal.

Implications for Practice

The findings demonstrate many of the common components of the School
District’s mentoring program were perceived to be helpful to most of the new teachers
interviewed. All new teachers interviewed developed at least some improvement in their
teacher self-efficacy as a result of their participation in the School District’s mentoring
program. And there was a marked absence of teacher self-efficacy in areas where some
new teachers did not participate in mentoring program activities that were perceived to
make a difference in the working lives of their colleagues.

What is less clear is the impact of the School District’s mentoring program upon
teacher retention and migration. Of the nine teachers who had a choice to return to the
school, four were not committed to returning to MMS after their second year. Of the
remaining five, only two were committed to returning to teaching at MMS beyond three
years. Of the 10 new teachers interviewed, nine want to remain working in the field of
public education.

Recommendation one. Ensure that all new educators are assigned a mentor.

Evidence emerging from the interviews reveals the lack of connection and the high level
of frustration experienced by the teacher who was not assigned a mentor could have been
easily avoided. A monthly screening of new hires and comparing these new hires to lists of assigned mentors needs to be conducted by central office staff. This screening needs to persist throughout the school year as new teachers are continually hired through the year.

**Recommendation two.** *As much as possible, ensure that new teachers participate in peer observations.* Interview data reveal teachers who participated in peer observations learned strategies they were able to immediately apply to their own classrooms. These observations proved supportive. In an attempt to increase participation in these observations, regular communication between mentor program administrators and mentors and their mentees should take place. Currently, there is a lead mentor in each building who is responsible for distributing information regarding mentoring program activities including peer observations. In hard-to-staff schools with high numbers of new teachers and mentors, communication can sometimes miss the mark. If central office mentoring program administrators employ regular communication with mentors via emailed messages and newsletters regarding means of observations, financial support for substitutes, and observation protocols, there is a better chance that information regarding the significance of these observations will make its way to new educators.

**Recommendation three.** *Provide more opportunities for new teachers and their mentors to attend professional development training on classroom management.* Interview data show novice educators benefitted from attending existing professional development in classroom management. Existing classroom management courses are 16 weeks long and start in November and January. However, these offerings may come too late for some new teachers who need support right away. Professional development sessions in classroom management should be offered for teachers before their contract
begins and in September as need for this sort of support is quickly identified by individual new teachers, their mentors and their principals. Offering more professional development opportunities is a way to support new teachers who struggle with classroom management.

**Directions for Further Research**

**Research suggestion one.** The findings from this study reveal several areas that would justify further research. One area of additional research indicated in the interview findings is a deeper exploration of teacher retention and influences upon teachers’ reasons for leaving a school. Setting up a mechanism that captures influences upon teacher decisions to leave a school or to leave the School District via brief one-on-one exit interviews or surveys with open-ended questions would help School District leaders target support for teachers deciding to leave their jobs. If departing teachers were asked to submit their letters of resignation in person to the School District’s human resources department, reasons for departure might have a better chance of being captured.

**Research suggestion two.** A second area for further exploration suggested in the interview findings is a deeper examination of how mentors are selected and trained. This aspect of the mentoring program is the most costly as mentors are paid stipends for their service. Yet the data reveal it is not the most impactful aspect of the program. An exploration of a cost-benefit-analysis of mentors, methods of selection and training, and the impact mentors have upon the teacher self-efficacy of new teachers would provide rich insights regarding whether continuing this aspect of the mentoring program is the most effective way to support new teachers.
**Research suggestion three.** A third area for future research suggested through the interview data is the effectiveness of the District-wide content-based induction. Few interviewees reported learning much from these induction sessions and they reported minimal impact upon their instruction. A deeper exploration of ways these content-based induction programs could impact classroom instruction would provide insights regarding ways new teachers could improve their content-based classroom instruction.

**Conclusion**

Digging deeply into the ways school leaders can support new teacher self-efficacy is not just a good idea. Supporting and retaining new teachers is the way that schools can ultimately continue to meet the day-to-day challenges of doing what is right for improving the academic lives of our students. In order to best meet the needs of novice educators, it is important for school leaders to consult with these new staff to determine whether their perceived needs are being met in ways that help them to grow in their teacher self-efficacy. In the event these perceived needs are not being met, school leaders must find ways adjust the mentoring program activities and supports to meet those needs—particularly in hard-to-staff schools.

Equally important is checking in with new teachers to ensure they feel supported in ways that deepen their connections with school staff, administration, students, and community. Deepening these connections will help teachers feel more at home in their new teaching positions and bolster their decisions to remain in their chosen profession and in their current places of employment thus providing our students with self-efficacious, experienced teachers.
## Appendix A

### Logic Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Short-term Outcomes</th>
<th>Long-term outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| School District Mentoring Program | • District-wide orientation  
• School based orientation  
• Content-based district-wide induction trainings  
• Assigned mentor conversations  
• School based monthly meetings with lead mentor/novice educators  
• Mentor-led classroom observations & coaching conversations | • Novice educators are introduced to the district’s curriculum, policies, and best-practices  
• Novice educators experience support and improved self-efficacy  
• Novice educators apply best practices | • New teachers are retained.  
• Students experience academic success. |
Appendix B

Induction Program Standards

Program Vision, Goals, and Institutional Commitment

Key Element 1: The program vision focuses on teacher effectiveness and students learning, and is part of a coherent development system for all educators.

Key Element 2: Specific goals, accompanied by clearly articulated rationales and informed by research, policy, and practice guide the work of the program leaders, principals, mentors, beginning educators, and other educational partners.

Key Element 3: Program design and implementation respond to the assessed needs of beginning educators, students, and school communities.

Key Element 4: The sponsoring institution works to improve conditions that affect beginning teacher success and their students’ learning.

Key Element 5: Sufficient time and resources are allocated to accomplish program goals and support continuous program improvement.

Key Element 6: A broad coalition of stakeholders demonstrates knowledge about, collaborates on, and advocates for quality program implementation.

II. Program Administration and Communication

Key Element 1: A designated program director with adequate status, authority, support, time, and resources guides program implementation and accountability.

Key Element 2: Program leaders have the knowledge, interest, and experience required to lead the program and participate in opportunities to refine and extend their capacity.
Key Element 3: Program leaders develop various two-way communication systems and organizational structures that solicit stakeholder input.

Key Element 4: Program leaders collaborate with organizational leaders to ensure that program goals and practices align with those used in teacher preparation, teacher and administrator professional development, leadership development programs, and teacher/administrator evaluations.

Key Element 5: Program leaders coordinate efforts with other site and district P-12 initiatives.

III. Principal and Site Leadership Engagement

Key Element 1: Principals, site leaders, and mentors work in partnership to improve beginning teacher instructional practice.

Key Element 2: Principals and site leaders implement policies, provide resources, and create conditions that promote beginning teacher success.

Key Element 3: Principals and site leaders participate in professional development that builds their capacity to advance beginning teacher development and mentor effectiveness.

Key Element 4: Mentors, principals, and site leaders coordinate induction activities with other school based initiatives and evaluation procedures.

IV. Program Assessment, Evaluation, and Accountability

Key Element 1: The program develops and implements a comprehensive system of program evaluation and continuous improvement based upon induction program standards.
Key Element 2: The program regularly collects data from multiple sources to demonstrate both implementation and impact.

Key Element 3: The program systematically shares evaluation findings with stakeholders for the purposes of collaborative programmatic decision-making, improvement, and accountability.

Key Element 4: Whenever possible, the program participates in external reviews designed to examine program quality and effectiveness, including program approval and formative peer review processes.

V. Mentor Roles and Responsibilities, Selection, Assignment, and Assessment

Key Element 1: Mentor roles and responsibilities are focused on the advancement of beginning teacher practice and teacher leadership, are clearly defined, and are widely communicated.

Key Element 2: The program has a formal, rigorous process for recruitment and selection that is based on criteria consistent with the roles and responsibilities of mentors and involves multiple stakeholders.

Key Element 3: Mentor-beginning teacher assignments are determined per relevant factors and are made in a timely manner.

Key Element 4: Mentors engage in a system of ongoing assessment for growth and accountability.

VI. Mentor Professional Development and Learning Communities

Key Element 1: The program designs and implements a mentor learning community for professional earning, problem-solving, and collaborative inquiry.

Key Element 2: Mentor professional development is guided by research,
standards, local priorities, and the developmental needs of mentors and beginning teachers.

Key Element 3: Mentors apply new learning to mentoring practice through engaging in goal-setting and reflection, implementing inquiry action plans, analyzing data of beginning educator development, field observations, and peer coaching.

Key Element 4: Professional development is provided by well-qualified presenters and facilitators.

VII. Professional Growth and Feedback System (for beginning educators)

Key Element 1: The system is based upon an ongoing cycle of inquiry characterized by a plan, teach/observe, and analyze/reflect cycle.

Key Element 2: Processes are designed to accelerate teacher effectiveness as defined by Professional Educator Performance (PPP) Standards and in alignment with the Virginia Standards of Learning.

Key Element 3: Mentors and beginning educators use multiple sources of evidence to assess educator strengths and areas for growth, and to guide one-on-one interactions and other professional learning activities.

Key Element 4: Mentors collaborate with beginning teachers to develop goals and plans based on each educator’s context and developmental needs.

Key Element 5: The induction system supports educators in meeting standards and requirements for evaluations under the Professional Performance Process.

VIII. Beginning Educator Professional Development and Learning Communities
Key Element 1: The program designs and implements beginning educator learning communities for professional learning, problem-solving, and collaborative inquiry.

Key Element 2: Professional development provides choice and flexibility, and is guided by research, standards, local priorities, and the developmental needs of beginning educators.

Key Element 3: Mentors assist beginning educators in applying new learning.

Key Element 4: Professional development is provided by well-qualified presenters and facilitators.

IX. Focus on Instructional Practice

Key Element 1: The program accelerates the ability of beginning educators to reflect upon and assess their practice in relation to the Professional Educator Performance Standards (PPP).

Key Element 2: The program emphasizes the importance of educators’ knowledge and utilization of adopted curriculum standards, grade-level and subject specific pedagogical skills, and performance levels for students.

Key Element 3: The program enhances capacity of beginning educators to analyze student work and interpret formative and summative data to plan and differentiate instruction that engages all learners.

Key Element 4: Students’ physical, cognitive, emotional, and social well-being is fostered by the Attributes of Successful Learning Environments and the Professional Educator Performance Standards (PPP).

Key Element 5: The program champions the ethical and equitable application of
technology to support assessment, planning, instruction, and learning.

Key Element 6: The program encourages beginning educators to collaboration with colleagues, families, and the broader educational community to ensure the success of all students.

X. Focus on Equity and Universal Access

Key Element 1: The program honors a vision that supports equitable and inclusive learning environments regardless of students’ ethnicity, race, socio-economic, cultural, academic, linguistic, or family background, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or giftedness.

Key Element 2: The program endorses a fundamental expectation for culturally responsive pedagogical practices to provide all learners with equitable access to the curriculum.

Key Element 3: The program upholds special populations laws, referral processes, services, accommodations, and modifications designed to support the learning of exceptional students; specific supports exist for beginning educators to gain proficiency in their work with special needs students. Key Element 4: The program supports a philosophy that recognizes students’ strengths and needs, uses positive behavioral support strategies, and employs a strengths-based approach to meet the needs of all students, including the full range of special populations.
Appendix C

Interview script

Hello, my name is Jennifer Vaughan and I am here in my capacity as a doctoral student at the College of William and Mary School of Education. I am going to ask a few questions that are designed to explore your perceptions regarding your first year of teaching.

The information collected in this interview will remain confidential and is for research purposes only. Neither your name, position, nor school will be mentioned in the publication of my research findings. You will be given the results of this research when it is complete.

You may choose to pass on a question or stop this interview if at any time you feel uncomfortable.

I will be recording this interview on my iPad but will be immediately transferring the recording to a password protected file at the end of this interview. The recording will then be deleted from the iPad. I will also be taking a few notes during the interview.

I will be asking you a series of scripted questions regarding your first year of teaching experience here at this school, and maybe some unscripted follow up questions.

Have you read and signed the consent form?

Do you have any questions before I begin?
## Appendix D

### A Priori Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes for Interviews</th>
<th>Abbreviations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School District Orientation</td>
<td>SDO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Based Orientation</td>
<td>SBO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District Mid-October Induction</td>
<td>SDOI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Conversations</td>
<td>MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Observations</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly School Based Meetings</td>
<td>MSB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-Wide Training</td>
<td>DWT</td>
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<td>Indications of Retention</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indications of Attrition</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indications of Migration</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration Influences</td>
<td>ADM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Influences (team; colleague; other)</td>
<td>OIT, OIC, OIO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Influence (increased teacher self-efficacy)</td>
<td>+TSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Influence (decreased teacher self-efficacy)</td>
<td>-TSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Discernable Influence</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of Strong Emotion</td>
<td>∆</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Letters of Invitation to Participants and Informed Consent.

Invitation to Novice Educators: Consent for Participation in Research

Dear [Novice Educator’s Name],

As a doctoral student of the College of William and Mary, I am conducting a dissertation research study on the outcomes of a school’s mentoring program as it relates to novice educators’ effective teaching practices, retention, and efficacy beliefs. This research study has been approved by the Division’s Office of Program Evaluation and your school principal. I would like to conduct an interview which will provide you an opportunity to share observations, experiences, and feelings about your first-year as a teacher. Interview questions relate to your educational setting and peer influences on your first year of teaching as well as your career goals. Participants have been selected because they are first year teachers.

Your interview responses will remain confidential. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. If you agree to participate and are selected, Jennifer Vaughan will send you a letter with further information and will provide contact information to schedule the interview at your convenience during June of 2017.

Are you willing to participate in an individual interview?

___ I do not choose to participate in the study.

___ I am willing to participate in the study.

Please provide your name and e-mail address below:

(Name)__________________________ (e-mail address)__________________________

Thank you,

Jennifer L. Vaughan

Doctoral Student, The College of William and Mary
Invitation to Novice Educators: Consent for Participation in Research (Interview)

Dear [Novice educator’s name],

You recently responded to a letter in which you expressed your willingness to participate in an interview about your perceptions of your experiences as a first-year teacher. You were selected to take part in an interview based on your response. Very soon, Jennifer Vaughan, the program evaluator will be phoning you to schedule your interview. The information below provides details about your interview. On the day of the interview, you will be asked to sign a consent form containing this same information.

Consent for Participation in Program Evaluation: The study concerns Novice Educators’ Perceptions of their first-year teaching experiences.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to determine new teachers’ perceptions of the mentor program in which they participated.

Who is conducting the study: Jennifer Vaughan is conducting this study to fulfill doctoral requirements of the Executive Ed.D. in K-12 Administration and Supervision program at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. You may request a copy of the study's results by sending an email to jlvaughan@email.wm.edu. The division’s Department Program Evaluation has reviewed and approved this study.

What are you asked to do: If you agree to be in this study, Jennifer Vaughan will conduct an interview with you. The interview will provide you an opportunity to share observations, experiences, and feelings about the use of student growth data in your teacher evaluation. Questions relate to your educational setting, academic successes you have experienced with your students, peer influences on your first year of teaching, and your career goals for the next five years. The interview will take about 45 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded.

Risks and benefits: There may be minimal psychological discomfort directly involved with this research. Teacher evaluation is an important aspect of your job. Your contributions will provide educational leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders with evidence-based judgments about the effectiveness of the teacher induction and mentoring program.

Your answers will be confidential. Your Participant identity and responses will be kept private. Only the researcher will have access to the records. If you agree to audio-record the session, the recording will be removed from the recording device and stored in a pass-code protected online dropbox until it has been transcribed. The recording will be destroyed once it has been transcribed, within approximately two months and no later
than August 1, 2017. Your name, school, or school division will not be associated with any results of this study.

**Taking part is voluntary:** You do not have to answer every question and may discontinue participating in this study at any time simply by discontinuing the interview. Participation, or the lack thereof, will not affect your current or future relationship with those in your school district.

**If you have questions:** Contact Jennifer Vaughan, the researcher at 703-474-1933 or jlvaughan@email.wm.edu if you have any questions or problems that arise in connection with participating in the study. You may report dissatisfaction with any aspect of this study to Dr. Thomas Ward, Chair of the Education Institutional Review Committee at phone 1-757-221-2358 or tom.ward.wm.edu. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature ________________________________ Date ______
Your Name (printed) __________________________________________

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview audio-recorded.

Your Signature ________________________________ Date ______
Signature of person obtaining consent __________________________ Date ______
Printed name of person obtaining consent ___________________________ Date ______

*This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study.*
References


VITA
Jennifer Lee Vaughan


2010-2012 Dominican University River Forest, Illinois Masters of Education English as a Second Language

1979-1983 Wheaton College Wheaton, Illinois Bachelor of Arts English Literature

Experience: 2015-present Professional Development Specialist Alton School District

2013-2015 SIOP Instructional Coach Alton School District

2011-2013 Middle School English Language Arts Instructor Alton School District

2007-2011 Middle School English Language Arts Instructor Orange County Public Schools Orange, Virginia

2004-2007 Circulation Specialist The University of Virginia Charlottesville, Virginia

1997-2004 Self Employed Reading, Pennsylvania

1991-1997 Officer of the University Harvard University Cambridge, Massachusetts

1989-1991 Head, Access Services Tufts University Medford, Massachusetts

1984-1989 High School English Instructor Oley Valley School District Oley, Pennsylvania

1983-1984 Middle School Reading Instructor Wilson School District West Lawn, Pennsylvania